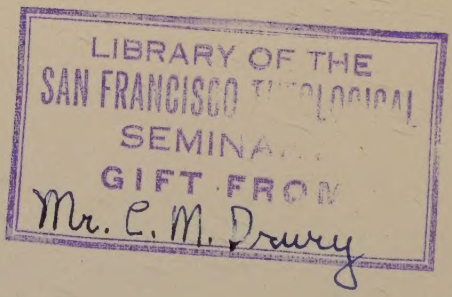
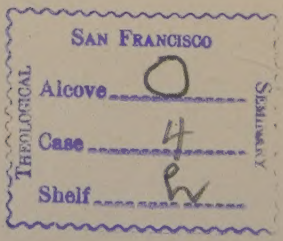
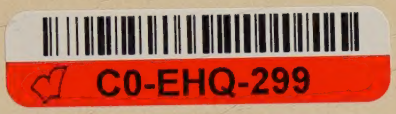
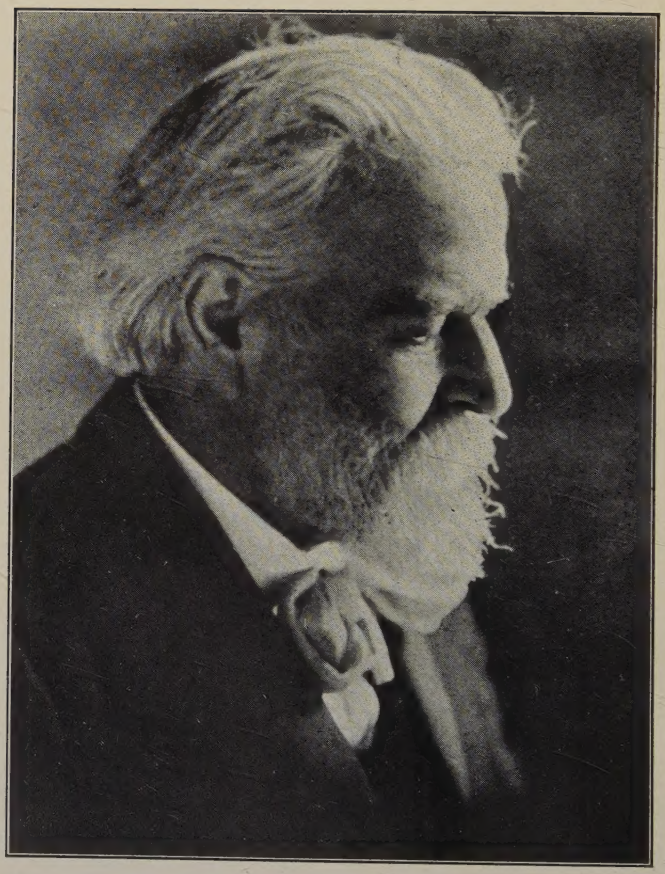
GIANT HOURS WITH POET PREACHERS

WILLIAM L. STIDGER


LIBRARY OF THE
SAN FRANCISCO
SEMINA
GIFT FROM
Mr. C. M. Drury


SAN FRANCISCO
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
Alcove O
Case 4
Shelf W


C0-EHQ-299



EDWIN MARKHAM

Giant Hours With Poet Preachers

BY
WILLIAM L. STIDGER

Introduction by
EDWIN MARKHAM

SAN FRANCISCO
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Alcove O
Case 4
Shelf 4e

THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

PR
601
S74
1918

18-10569

Copyright, 1918, by
WILLIAM L. STIDGER

First Edition Printed April, 1918
Reprinted October, 1918

To
White-Souled
EDWIN MARKHAM
Democracy's Voice, Humanity's Friend
I Dedicate This Book

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION 7

FOREWORD 11

AMERICAN POETS

I. EDWIN MARKHAM 15

II. VACHEL LINDSAY 30

III. JOAQUIN MILLER 41

IV. ALAN SEEGER 51

ENGLISH POETS

V. JOHN OXENHAM 67

VI. ALFRED NOYES 83

VII. JOHN MASEFIELD 97

VIII. ROBERT SERVICE 108

IX. RUPERT BROOKE 117

LIST OF PORTRAITS

EDWIN MARKHAM ..... *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

VACHEL LINDSAY 30

JOAQUIN MILLER 41

ALAN SEEGER 51

JOHN OXENHAM 67

ALFRED NOYES 83

JOHN MASEFIELD 97

ROBERT SERVICE 108

RUPERT BROOKE 117

INTRODUCTION

IN writing to the readers of Mr. Stidger's book I feel as though I were writing to old friends, friends who may have an interest in knowing some of the thoughts that I hold regarding questions of the hour and questions of the future.

The Christian as he looks out upon the battling and broken world sees much to sadden his heart. Thinkers are everywhere asking, "Is Christianity a failure?" I hasten to assure you that Christianity has not failed, for Christianity has nowhere been tried yet, nowhere been tried in a large social sense. Christianity has been tried by individuals, and it has been found to be comforting and transforming. But it has never been tried by any large group of people in any one place—never by a whole city —never by a whole kingdom—never by a whole people. It is for this trial that the watching angels are waiting.

Our holy religion is not a saving power merely for individuals; it is also a saving power for society in its industrial order. We have

applied it to the individual in the past, but we have never made any wholehearted effort to make religion the working principle of society. Religion is always cooperative and brotherly, but we have not yet made any earnest effort to apply the cooperative and brotherly principle to business. We have tried to persuade the individual to express the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount, but we have made no earnest effort to urge society to express the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount.

Therefore, while it is true that we have individual Christians—men and women who make noble sacrifices in their effort to live the good life—it is also true that we have no Christian society anywhere on earth, no Christian civilization anywhere under the stars. Sometimes a careless talker will refer to our social order as "a Christian civilization." All such references, dear friends, disturb our hearts; for they prove that the speaker has no conception of what a Christian civilization would be, how noble and brotherly it would be. Five minutes' reading of the Sermon on the Mount will convince any alert mind that we are yet thousands of miles from a Christian civilization. To speak of only one thing, it is certain that in a Christian civilization these cruel riches we see

standing side by side with these cruel poverties could not exist; they would all crumble and vanish away in the fire of the social passion of the Christ.

If we have not a Christian civilization, what have we? We have a civilization that is half barbaric; we have a social order with a light sprinkling of Christians in it. It is the hope of the future that this body of earnest Christian men and women will awaken to the call of the social Christ, awake determined to infuse his spirit into the industrial order, and thus extend the power of the cross down into the material ground of our existence. Men are not fully saved until tools are saved, till industries are saved. They must all be lit with the brother spirit of Christ the Artisan.

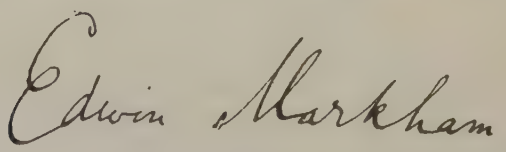
All of this transformation is implied in the Sermon on the Mount. For that sermon may be taken to be the first draft of the constitution of the new social order that the Christ has in his heart for men. It was this new order that he had in mind when he uttered the great invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." All the work-worn toilers of the world were to find rest in the new brotherly order about to be established on the earth. The Master has laid

one great duty upon his followers—to em-brother men and to emparadise the world.

This is a great labor, for it demands that the spirit of the brother Christ shall sing in all the wheels and sound in all the steps of our industrial life. It means that the Golden Rule shall become the working principle in our social order. This is the salvation that Christ came to bring to the world; this is the glad tidings; this the good news to men!

This is only a glimpse of the great social truth of the Lord that is beginning to break like a new morning upon the world. And what I have said in this letter I have tried a thousand times to say in my poems that have gone out into the world. And this new note I catch in the lines of the poets everywhere in modern poetry, especially in the poets discussed in the following pages.

Yours in the Fellowship of the great hopes,



West New Brighton, N. Y.

FOREWORD

VACHEL LINDSAY, one of the modern Christian poets, whose writings are discussed in this book, has expressed the reason for the book itself in these four lines:

> "I wish that I had learned by heart
> Some lyrics read that day;
> I knew not 'twas a giant hour
> That soon would pass away."

The author of this book makes no assumption that the "Giant Hours" are in the setting he has given these literary gems, but in the "lyrics" themselves.

AMERICAN POETS

Edwin Markham
Vachel Lindsay
Joaquin Miller
Alan Seeger

I

EDWIN MARKHAM[1]

A Study of Happiness in Poverty, in Service, in Lowliness; and a Bit of "Script" for the Journey of Life

EDWIN MARKHAM is the David of modern poetry. He is biblical in the simplicity of his style. He, like the poet of old, tended sheep on "The Suisün Hills," and of it he speaks:

> "Long, long ago I was a shepherd boy,
> My young heart touched with wonder and wild joy."
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

None less than William Dean Howells has said of him, "Excepting always my dear Whitcomb Riley, Edwin Markham is the first of the Americans." "The greatest poet of the century" is the estimate of Ella Wheeler Wilcox; and Francis Grierson adds, "Edwin Markham is one of the greatest poets of the age, and the

[1]The poetical selections appearing in this chapter are used by permission of the publishers, Doubleday, Page & Co., and are taken from the following works: The Shoes of Happiness and The Man with the Hoe.

greatest poet of democracy." Dr. David G. Downey makes his estimate of the poet, in his book, Modern Poets and Christian Teaching, a little broader and deeper in the two phrases: "He is not more poet than prophet," and, "He is the poet of humanity—of man in relations." And of them all I feel that the latter estimate is best put, for Edwin Markham is more than "the poet of democracy"; he is the poet of all humanity, down on the earth where humanity lives. And that Dr. Downey was right in calling him "prophet" one needs but to read some lines from "The Man with the Hoe" in the light of the Russian revolution, and proof is made:

"O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God,
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quenched?
How will you ever straighten up this shape?
. . . . . .
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
When those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb Terror shall reply to God,
After the silence of the centuries?"

The Man with the Hoe.

"How will it be with kingdoms and with kings?" the "Man with the Hoe" is answering in Russia this star-lit night and sun-illumined day. Yes, Markham is prophet as well as poet.

And to this humble writer's way of reading poetry there were never four lines for pure poetry more beautifully writ, neither across the seas, nor here at home, neither east nor west, than these four from "Virgilia":

"Forget it not till the crowns are crumbled
And the swords of the kings are rent with rust;
Forget it not till the hills lie humbled,
And the springs of the seas run dust."

The Shoes of Happiness.

Prophetic? Yes! But ah, the music of it! Here rings and here sings David the shepherd; the sweet lute, the harp, the wind in the trees, the surge of the ocean-reef. It is music of a high and holy kind.

Which reminds me that I am to treat in this chapter on Markham only of what he has written since 1906, the preceding period, best known through his "Man with the Hoe," having been discussed by Dr. Downey in the book heretofore mentioned. I have the joy-task in these brief lines to bring to you Markham's "The Shoes of Happiness," which seems to me the strongest book he has written, not forgetting, either, "The Hoe" book, as he himself calls it.

If you have the privilege of personal friendship with this "Father Poet," he will write for you somewhere, some time, some place, these

four favorite lines, with a twinkle in his eyes that is half boy and half sage, but all love, which quatrain he calls "Outwitted":

> "He drew a circle that shut me out—
> Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
> But Love and I had the wit to win:
> We drew a circle that took him in!"
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

And with these four lines he introduces the new book of poems, "The Shoes of Happiness."

The Happiness of Poverty

One wonders where "The Shoes of Happiness" may be found, and the answer is forthcoming in the first of "Six Stories," when he finds that the Sultan Mahmoud is near unto death, and that there is just one thing that will make him well, and that is that he may wear the shoes of a perfectly happy man:

> "For only by this can you break the ban:
> You must wear the shoes of a happy man."
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

The Vizier was sent to find these shoes or lose his own head:

> "Go forth, Vizier, when the dawn is red,
> And bring me the shoes, or send instead,
> By the hand of this trusted slave, your head!"
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

He first found a crowd of idle rich going forth for a day's outing among the fields and flowers, a "swarm of the folk of high degree," and thought to find the shoes here, but, alas! he found that

> "In each glad heart was a wistful cry;
> Behind each joy was a secret sigh."
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

He turned from the rich and sought the homes of the poor, and the Father in the home of the poor said unto him:

> "Ah, Vizier,
> I have seven sweet joys, but I have one fear:
> The dread of to-morrow ever is here!"
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

A Poet was found weaving a song of happiness, and the Vizier thought that surely here would he find the man with the "happy shoes," but the Poet cried:

> "No," sighed the poet; "you do me wrong,
> For sorrow is ever the nest of song."
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

Everywhere that he wandered in search he found some touch of unhappiness. He tried Youth and Age, but,

> "The young were restless that youth should stay,
> The old were sad that it went away."
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

He thought to find the shoes on the feet of the Lover, but heard the Lover say:

> "Yes, yes; but love is a tower of fears,
> A joy half torment, a heaven half tears!"
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

He had heard of a wise old Sage, who had been to Mecca, and sought him only to hear, "I am not glad; I am only wise." At last he heard of a man from far Algiers. With hurried steps he sought in vain. At last one day he found a man lying in a field:

> "'Ho,' cried Halil, 'I am seeking one
> Whose days are all in a brightness run.'—
> 'Then I am he, for I have no lands,
> Nor have any gold to crook my hands.
> Favor, nor fortune, nor fame have I,
> And I only ask for a road and a sky—
> These, and a pipe of the willow-tree
> To whisper the music out of me.'
>
> "Out into the field the vizier ran.
> 'Allah-il-Allah! but you are the man;
> Your shoes then, quick, for the great sultan—
> Quick, and all fortunes are yours to choose!'
> 'Yes, mighty Vizier, . . . but I have no shoes!'"
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

The Happiness of Lowliness

And just as this opening poem teaches the happiness of poverty, so the next, "The Juggler

of Touraine," teaches the happiness of lowliness.

Poor Barnabas, just a common juggler, when winter came, because he had been spending the summer amusing people, had no place to go, and a sympathetic monk took him into the monastery to live. Barnabas was happy for a time; but after a while, as he saw everybody else worshiping the Beautiful Mother with lute and brush, viol, drum, talent, and prayer, he began to feel that his talents were worthless:

> "But I, poor Barnabas, nothing can I,
> But drone in the sun as a drowsy fly."
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

Then came a thought that leaped like flame over his being, and an hour later the monks found him, kneeling in the sacred altar place. What he was doing chagrined them. They were shocked just as many people of this day, to see a man worshiping with a different bend of the knee than that to which they had been accustomed. How prone we are to judge those who do not worship just as we have worshiped! This seems such a common human weakness that Alfred Noyes, with a touch of kindly indignation, speaks a word in "The Forest of

Wild Thyme" that may be interjected just here in this study of Barnabas the juggler, whom the monks indignantly found worshiping the Virgin by juggling his colored balls in the air, and speaking thus as he juggled:

> "'Lady,' he cried again, 'look, I entreat:
> I worship with fingers, and body, and feet!'
>
> "And they heard him cry at Our Lady's shrine:
> 'All that I am, Madame, all is thine!
> Again I come with spangle and ball
> To lay at your altar my little, my all!'"
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

But the poor old monks were indignant. They, and some others of more modern days, had never caught the real gist of the "Judge not" of the New Testament; nor had they read Noyes:

> "How foolish, then, you will agree,
> Are those who think that all must see
> The world alike, or those who scorn
> Another, who perchance, was born
> Where—in a different dream from theirs—
> What they called sins to him are prayers!
> We cannot judge; we cannot know;
> All things mingle, all things flow;
> There's only one thing constant here—
> Love—that untranscended sphere:
> Love, that while all ages run
> Holds the wheeling worlds in one;
> Love, that, as your sages tell,
> Soars to heaven and sinks to hell."
>
> "The Forest of Wild Thyme."

No, we have no right to judge one another. The monks condemned poor Barnabas because he was not worshiping as they had always worshiped. They too forgot the real spirit of worship as they condemned him:

"'Nothing like this do the rules provide!
This is scandal, this is a shame,
This madcap prank in Our Lady's name.
Out of the doors with him; back to the street:
He has no place at Our Lady's feet!'"

The Shoes of Happiness.

However, then, as now, men are not the final judges:

"But why do the elders suddenly quake,
Their eyes a-stare and their knees a-shake?
Down from the rafters arching high,
Her blowing mantle blue with the sky—
Lightly down from the dark descends
The Lady of Beauty and lightly bends
Over Barnabas stretched in the altar place,
And wipes the dew from his shining face;
Then touching his hair with a look of light,
Passes again from the mortal sight.
An odor of lilies hallows the air,
And sounds as of harpings are everywhere.

"'Ah,' cry the elders, beating the breast,
'So the lowly deed is the lofty test!
And whatever is done from the heart to Him
Is done from the height of the Seraphim!'"

The Shoes of Happiness.

"How the Great Guest Came"

A Study of Complete Happiness in Service

I have never found a poem which more truly

pictures the Christ and how he comes to human beings than this one of Markham's. Conrad the cobbler had a dream, when he had grown old, that the Master would come "His guest to be." He arose at dawn on that day of great expectations, decorated his simple shop with boughs of green and waited:

> "His friends went home; and his face grew still
> As he watched for the shadow across the sill;
> He lived all the moments o'er and o'er,
> When the Lord should enter the lowly door—
> The knock, the call, the latch pulled up,
> The lighted face, the offered cup.
> He would wash the feet where the spikes had been;
> He would kiss the hands where the nails went in;
> And then at last he would sit with him
> And break the bread as the day grew dim."
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

But the Master did not come. Instead came a beggar and the cobbler gave him shoes; instead came an old crone with a heavy load of faggots. He gave her a lift with her load and some of the food that he had prepared for the Christ when he should come. Finally a little child came crying along the streets, lost. He pitied the child and left his shop to take it to its mother; such was his great heart of love. He hurried back that he might not miss the Great Guest when he came. But the Great Guest did not come. As the evening came and

the shadows were falling through the window of his shop, more and more the truth, with all its weight of sadness, bore in upon him, that the dream was not to come true; that he had made a mistake; that Christ was not to come to his humble shop. His heart was broken and he cried out in his disappointment:

> "Why is it, Lord, that your feet delay?
> Did you forget that this was the day?"
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

Then what sweeter scene in all the lines of the poetry of the world than this that follows? Where is Christ more wonderfully and simply summed up; his spirit of love and care?

> "Then soft in the silence a voice he heard:
> 'Lift up your heart, for I kept my word.
> Three times I came to your friendly door;
> Three times my shadow was on your floor.
> I was the beggar with bruisèd feet;
> I was the woman you gave to eat;
> I was the child on the homeless street!'"
>
> The Shoes of Happiness.

One is reminded here of Masefield's "The Everlasting Mercy," wherein he speaks as Markham speaks about the child:

> "And he who gives a child a treat
> Makes joy-bells ring in Heaven's street;
> And he who gives a child a home

Builds palaces in Kingdom Come;
And she who gives a baby birth
Brings Saviour Christ again to earth."

The Everlasting Mercy.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," another great-hearted Poet once said; and these words Markham, in "How the Great Guest Came," has made real.

"Scrip for the Journey"

"Scrip for the Journey" is all that it claims to be. Markham is not doing what Lindsay did. Lindsay started out on a long journey with only his poems for money. He meant to make his way buying his food with a verse. And he did that very thing. But Markham had a different idea, an idea that all of us need scrip for that larger journey, scrip that is not money and scrip that does not buy mere material food, but food for the soul. He means it to be scrip that will help us along the hard way. And he who has this scrip is rich indeed, in his inner life.

"The Place of Peace"

One would pay much for peace at any time, but especially when one on the journey of life is wearied unto death with sin, and bickering,

and trouble and hurt and pain. Life holds so much heartache and heartbreak. Markham has herein the answer:

"At the heart of the cyclone tearing the sky,
And flinging the clouds and the towers by,
Is a place of central calm;
So here in the roar of mortal things,
I have a place where my spirit sings,
In the hollow of God's palm."

The Shoes of Happiness.

And when we learn to put our business ventures there as Abbey has his Sir Galahad do in the Vigil panel of "The Search for the Holy Grail," in Boston Library; and when we have learned to put our homes, and our children, and our souls "In the hollow of God's palm," there will be peace on the journey of life. Yes, that is good scrip.

"ANCHORED TO THE INFINITE"

What a lesson the poet brings us from the great swinging bridge at Niagara, as he tells of the tiny thread that was flown from a kite from shore to shore; and then a larger string, and then a heavy cord, and then a rope, and finally the great cable, and the mighty bridge. And this he applies to life!

"So we may send our little timid thought
Across the void out to God's reaching hands—
Send out our love and faith to thread the deep—

Thought after thought until the little cord
Has greatened to a chain no chance can break,
And—we are anchored to the Infinite."

The Shoes of Happiness.

Who does not need to know how simple a thing will lead to infinite anchorage? Who does not need to know that just the tiny threads of love and faith will draw greater cords and greater, stronger ropes until at last the chasm between man and God on the journey is bridged, and we may be anchored to him forever. This indeed is good scrip for the journey of life Godward.

"THERE IS NO TIME FOR HATE"

The world is full of hate these days. Warmad Germany produced "The Hymn of Hate," the lowest song that ever was written in the history of the world. It seems impossible that a censorship so strict could ever let such a mass of mire out to the world. But when one reads this Markham poem, he somehow feels that life is so big, and yet so brief, that even in war we are all brother-men and, as the opening lines say,

"There is no time for hate, O wasteful friend:
Put hate away until the ages end.
Have you an ancient wound? Forget the wrong.
Out in my West, a forest loud with song
Towers high and green over a field of snow,
Over a glacier buried far below."

The Shoes of Happiness.

And if all the world would learn the meaning of this great phrase, "There is no time for hate," the world would happier be. Good scrip for the journey? The best there is, is to know "There is no time for hate."

II

VACHEL LINDSAY, POET OF TOWN; AND CITY TOO[1]

A Study of Christian Influences in Village and City; on Temperance, Missions, and Races

VACHEL LINDSAY is not only a poet but he is also a preacher. I do not know whether he is ordained or not, but in a leaflet that he recently sent me, he says, "Mr. Lindsay offers the following sermons to be preached on short notice and without a collection, in any chapel that will open its doors as he passes by: 'The Gospel of the Hearth,' 'The Gospel of Voluntary Poverty,' 'The Holiness of Beauty.'"

His truly great book, "The Congo," that poem which so sympathetically catches the spirit of the uplift of the Negro race through Christianity, that weird, musical, chanting, swinging, singing, sweeping, weeping, rhythmic, flowing, swaying, clanging, banging, leaping, laughing, groaning, moaning book of

[1]The poetical selections appearing in this chapter are used by permission, and are taken from the following works: The Congo, and General William Booth Enters Into Heaven. Published by the Macmillan Company, New York.

VACHEL LINDSAY

the elementals, was inspired suddenly, one Sabbath evening, as the poet sat in church listening to a returned missionary speaking on "The Congo." Nor a Poe nor a Lanier ever wrote more weirdly or more musically.

The poet himself, Christian to the bone, suggests that his poetry must be chanted to get the full sweep and beauty. This I have done, alone by my woodfire of a long California evening, and have found it strangely, beautifully, wonderfully full of memories of church. I think that it is the echo of old hymns that I catch in his poetry. Biblical they are, in their simplicity, Christian until they drip with love.

Christ and the City Soul

I think that no Christian poet has so caught the soul of the real city. One phrase that links Christ with the city is the old-fashioned yet ever thrilling phrase, "The Soul of the City Receives the Gift of the Holy Spirit."

An electrical sign suggests prayer to him. It is a unique thought in "A Rhyme About An Electrical Advertising Sign," the lines of which startle one almost with their newness:

"Some day this old Broadway shall climb to the skies,
As a ribbon of cloud on a soul-wind shall rise.
And we shall be lifted rejoicing by night,
Till we join with the planets who choir their delight.

> The signs in the street and the signs in the skies
> Shall make a new Zodiac guiding the wise,
> And Broadway make one, with that marvelous stair
> That is climbed by the rainbow-clad spirits of prayer."
>
> The Congo.

He looks straight up above the signs to heaven. But he does not forget to look down also, where the people are, the folks that walk and live and crawl under the electric signs. In "Galahad, Knight Who Perished" (a poem dedicated to all crusaders against the international and interstate traffic in young girls), this phrase rings and rings its way into Christian consciousness:

> "Galahad—knight who perished—awaken again,
> Teach us to fight for immaculate ways among men."
>
> The Congo.

And again and again one is rudely awakened from his ease by such lines as "The leaden-eyed" children of the city which he pictures:

> "Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly;
> Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap;
> Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve;
> Not that they die, but that they die like sheep."
>
> The Congo.

Who has not seen factory windows in village, town, and city, and who has not known that "Factory windows are always broken"? How

this smacks of pall, and smoke, and dirt, and grind, and hurt and little weak children, slaves of industry! Thank God, Vachel Lindsay, that the Christian Church has found an ally in you; and poet and preacher together—for they are both akin—pray God we may soon abolish forever child slavery. Yes, no wonder "Factory windows are always broken." The children break them because they hate a prison.

The "Coal Heaver," "The Scissors Grinder," "The Mendicant," "The Tramp," all so smacking of the city, have their interpretation.

I wish in these pages might be quoted all of "The Soul of the City Receives the Gift of the Holy Spirit," for it daringly, beautifully, and strongly carries into the new philosophy which Mr. Lindsay is introducing the thought that every village, every town, every city has a community soul that must be saved, through Christian influence. But the ring of it and the swing of it will suggest itself in a few verses:

"Censers are swinging
Over the town;
Censers are swinging,
Look overhead!
Censers are swinging,
Heaven comes down.
City, dead city,
Awake from the dead!
. . . .

"Soldiers of Christ
For battle grow keen.
Heaven-sent winds
Haunt alley and lane.
Singing of life
In town-meadows green
After the toil
And battle and pain.

. . . .

"Builders, toil on,
Make all complete.
Make Springfield wonderful.
Make her renown
Worthy this day,
Till at God's feet,
Tranced, saved forever,
Waits the white town."

The Congo.

Ah, if we could but catch this vision of not only the individuals but the city itself receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, we would have therein a new and a tremendous force for good.

One might quote from "The Drunkards in the Street":

"Within their gutters, drunkards dream of Hell.
I say my prayers by my white bed to-night,
With the arms of God about me, with the angels singing, singing
Until the grayness of my soul grows white."

General William Booth.

He goes to the bottom of the social evil, down to its economic causes, and blames the state for

"The Trap," and this striking couplet rings in one's heart long after the book is laid down:

> "In liberty's name we cry
> For these women about to die!"
>
> General William Booth.

The poet who speaks in "The City That Will Not Repent" is only feeling over again, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" The "Old Horse in the City," "To Reformers in Despair," "The Gamblers"—it is all there: the heartaches, the struggle for existence, the fallen woman, the outcast man, the sound of drums, the tambourines, the singing of the mission halls. You find it all, especially in "General William Booth Enters Into Heaven." Here is life—the very life of life in the city.

Foreign Missions

They who have found opposition to foreign missions will discover with a thrill a new helper in Poet Lindsay, he who has won the ear of the literary world. It is good to hear one of his worth, singing the battle challenge of missions, just as it is good to hear him call the modern village, town, and city to "The Gift of the Holy

Spirit." "Foreign Fields in Battle Array" brings this thrillingly prophetic, Isaiahanic verse:

"What is the final ending?
The issue can we know?
Will Christ outlive Mohammed?
Will Kali's altar go?
This is our faith tremendous—
Our wild hope, who shall scorn—
That in the name of Jesus,
The world shall be reborn!"

General William Booth.

"Reborn"—does not that phrase sound familiar to Methodist ears, as does that other phrase, "The Soul of the City Receives the Gift of the Holy Spirit"? Or, again, hear two lines from "Star of My Heart":

"All hearts of the earth shall find *new birth*
And wake no more to sin."

General William Booth.

Temperance

In these days, when the world is being swept clean with the besom of temperance, the poet who sings the song of temperance is the "poet that sings to battle." Lindsay has done this in some lines in his "General William Booth Enters Into Heaven," which he admits having written while a field worker in the Anti-Saloon

League in Illinois. At the end of each verse we have one of these three couplets:

"But spears are set, the charge is on,
Wise Arthur shall be King!"

"Fierce Cromwell builds the flower-bright towns
And a more sunlit land;"

and,

"Our God establishes his arm
And makes the battle sure!"

General William Booth.

He puts the temperance worker in the "Round Table" under the heading, "King Arthur's Men Have Come Again." He lifts the battle to a high realm. "To go about redressing human wrongs," as King Arthur's Knights were sworn to do, would certainly be a most appropriate motto for the modern Christian temperance worker, and Lindsay is the only poet acknowledged by the literary world who has sung this Galahad's praise with keen insight.

But his greatest poem, "The Congo," that poem which has captured the imagination of the literary world and which is so little known to the Christian world—where it ought to be known best of all—will give a glimpse of the new Christian influence on the races. The poet suggests that it be chanted to the tune of

the old hymn, "Hark, ten thousand harps and voices."

It is a strange poem. It is so new that it is startling, but it has won. Listen to its strange swing, and see its stranger pictures. Through the thin veneer of a new civilization, back of the Christianized Negro race, the poet sees, under the inspiration of a missionary sermon delivered in a modern church, the race that was:

"Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,
Barrel-house kings with feet unstable,
Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table,
Pounded on the table,
Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom,
Hard as they were able,
Boom, boom, BOOM
With a silk umbrella, and the handle of a broom,
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM
Then I had religion, then I had a vision.
I could not turn from their revel in derision.
THEN I SAW THE CONGO CREEPING
THROUGH THE BLACK,
CUTTING THROUGH THE FORESTS WITH
A GOLDEN TRACK!"

The Congo.

Then follows as vital, vivid, and vigorous a description as ever was written by pen, inspired of God, tipped with fire, of the uplift and redemption of the Negro race, through Jesus Christ.

The "General William Booth" title poem to

the second Lindsay book shook the literary world awake with its perfect interpretation of The Salvation Army leader. It is a poem to be chanted at first with "Bass drums beaten loudly" and then "with banjos"; then softly with "sweet flute music," and finally, as the great General comes face to face with Christ, with a "Grand chorus of all instruments; tambourines to the foreground." Running through this poem is the refrain of "Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?" and the last lines catch the tender, yet absolutely unique spirit of the entire poem:

> "And when Booth halted by the curb for prayer
> He saw his Master thro' the flag-filled air.
> Christ came gently with a robe and crown
> For Booth the soldier, while the throng knealt down.
> He saw King Jesus. They were face to face,
> And he knealt a-weeping in that holy place,
> Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"
>
> General William Booth.

But one could not get Lindsay to the hearts of folks, one could not make the picture complete, without putting Lincoln in, any more than he could make Lindsay complete without putting into these pages "The Soul of the City Receives the Gift of the Holy Spirit," or "General William Booth Enters Into Heaven," or "The Congo." Lincoln seems to be as much a

part of Lindsay as he is a part of Springfield. Lindsay and Lincoln, to those who love both, mean Springfield, and Springfield means Lincoln and Lindsay. And what Lindsay is trying to do for city, for village, for town, for the Negro, for every human being, is voiced in his poem, "Lincoln."

"Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all,
That which is gendered in the wilderness,
From lonely prairies and God's tenderness."

General William Booth.

Let this poem "Heart of God" be the benediction of this chapter on Lindsay:

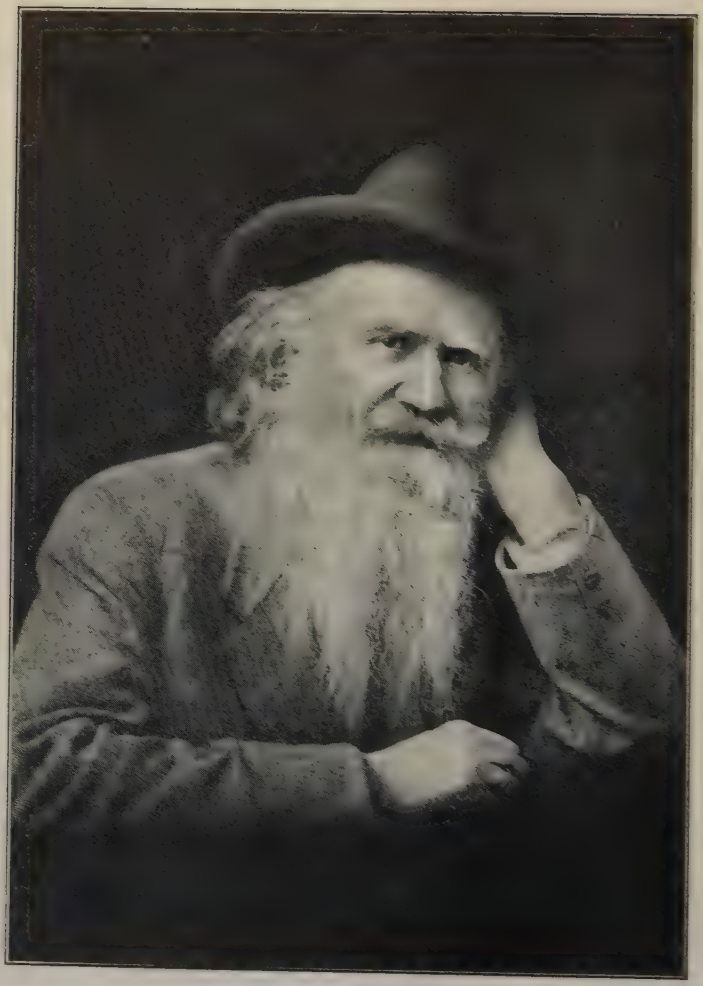
"O great heart of God,
Once vague and lost to me,
Why do I throb with your throb to-night,
In this land, eternity?

"O, little heart of God,
Sweet intruding stranger,
You are laughing in my human breast,
A Christ-child in a manger.

"Heart, dear heart of God,
Beside you now I kneel,
Strong heart of faith. O heart not mine,
Where God has set His seal.

"Wild, thundering heart of God,
Out of my doubt I come,
And my foolish feet with prophets' feet
March with the prophets' drum!"

General William Booth.



JOAQUIN MILLER

III

JOAQUIN MILLER[1]

A Study of Home, Father Love, Great Moments with Jesus Christ, Heaven, and God

IT was a warm, sunny May California day; and the day stands out, even above California days. A climb up the Piedmont hills back of Oakland, California, brought us to "The Heights," the unique home of Joaquin Miller, poet of the West and poet of the world.

A visit to the homes of the New England poets is always interesting because of historic and literary associations, but none of them has the touch of the unique personality of Miller.

Most people interested in things literary know that Miller, with a great desire to emphasize the freedom of the individual, built a half dozen separate houses, one for himself, one for his wife, one for his daughter Juanita, several for guests from all over the world who were always visiting him, and a little chapel. Literary men from every nation on the planet

[1]The quotations from the poems of Joaquin Miller appearing in this chapter are used by permission of the Harr Wagner Publishing Company, owners of copyright.

visited Miller at "The Heights." Most people interested knew also that Miller, with his own hands, had built monuments of stone to Fremont, the explorer, to Moses, and to Browning. There was also a granite funeral pyre for himself, within sight of the little "God's Acre," in which he had buried some eighteen or twenty outcasts and derelicts of earth who had no other plot to call their own in which to take their last long sleep.

We expected to find this strange group of buildings deserted, but after inspecting the chapel, which was modeled after Newstead Abbey, and after rambling through the old-fashioned garden that Miller himself had planted—a garden with a perfect riot of colors —suddenly a little woman with a sweet face walked up to us out of the bushes and said, "Are you lovers of the poet?"

I humbly replied that we were. Then she said: "I am Mrs. Miller, and you are welcome. When you have looked around, come into Mr. Miller's own room and be refreshed. After that I will read to you from his writings."

It sounded stagey at first, but the more we knew of this sweet-faced widow of the poet the less we found about her that was not simple and sweet and natural.

After wandering around, through the fascinating paths, under the great cross of a thousand pine trees, among the roses, and flowers that he had planted with his own hands, we came at last to the little house that Mrs. Miller had called "The poet's own room," and there were we refreshed with cool lemonade and cakes. In the littleness of my soul I wondered when we were to pay for these favors, but the longer we remained the more was I shamed as I saw that this hospitality was just the natural expression of a woman, and a beautiful daughter's desire to extend the hospitality of the dead poet himself, to any who loved his writings.

There was the bed on which Miller lay for months writing many of his greatest poems, including the famous "Columbus." There was his picturesque sombrero, still hanging where he had put it last on the post of the great bed. His pen was at hand; his writing pad, his chair, his great fur coat, his handkerchief of many colors which in life he always wore about his neck; his great heavy, high-topped boots. And it was sunset.

Then Mrs. Miller began to read. As the slanting rays of as crimson a sunset as God ever painted were falling through the great

cross of pine trees, Mrs. Miller's dramatic, sweet, sympathetic voice interpreted his poems for us. I sat on the bed from which Miller had, just a few months previous to that, heard the great call. The others sat in his great rockers. Mrs. Miller stood as she read. I am sure that "Columbus" will never be lifted into the sublime as it was when she read it that late May afternoon, with its famous, and thrilling phrase "Sail on! Sail on! And on! And on!"

A Study of Home

I had thought before hearing Mrs. Miller read "The Greatest Battle that Ever was Fought" that I had caught all the subtle meanings of it, but after her reading that great tribute to womanhood I knew that I had never dreamed the half of its inner meaning:

"The greatest battle that ever was fought—
Shall I tell you where and when?
On the maps of the world you will find it not:
It was fought by the Mothers of Men.

"Not with cannon or battle shot,
With sword or nobler pen;
Not with eloquent word or thought
From the wonderful minds of men;

"But deep in a walled up woman's heart;
A woman that would not yield;
But bravely and patiently bore her part;
Lo! there is that battlefield.

"No marshaling troops, no bivouac song,
No banner to gleam and wave;
But Oh these battles they last so long—
From babyhood to the grave!

"But faithful still as a bridge of stars
She fights in her walled up town;
Fights on, and on, in the endless wars;
Then silent, unseen goes down!

"Ho! ye with banners and battle shot,
With soldiers to shout and praise,
I tell you the kingliest victories fought
Are fought in these silent ways."

Then, as if to give us another illustration of her great poet husband's home love, she read for us "Juanita":

"You will come, my bird, Bonita?
Come, for I by steep and stone,
Have built such nest, for you, Juanita,
As not eagle bird hath known.
. . . . . .
All is finished! Roads of flowers
Wait your loyal little feet.
All completed? Nay, the hours
Till you come are incomplete!"

Who that hath the blessing of little children will not understand this waiting, yearning love of Miller for his ten-year-old girl, who was at that time in New York with her mother waiting until "The Heights" should be finished?

Who does not understand how incomplete the hours were until she came?

"You will come, my dearest, truest?
Come, my sovereign queen of ten:
My blue sky will then be bluest;
My white rose be whitest then."

Great Moments with Christ

Miller had a profound, deep, sincere love for Christ, and more than any poet I know did he express with deep insight and with deeper sweetness the great moments in Christ's life. He made these great moments human. He brings them near to us, so that we see them more clearly. He makes them warm our hearts, and we feel that Christ's words are truly our words in this, our own day. In that great scene where Christ blessed little children, who has ever made it sweeter and nearer and warmer with human touch?

"Then reaching his hands, he said, lowly,
'Of such is my Kingdom,' and then
Took the little brown babes in the holy
White hands of the Saviour of Men;

"Held them close to his heart and caressed them,
Put his face down to theirs as in prayer,
Put their hands to his neck and so blessed them
With baby-hands hid in his hair."

The scene with the woman taken in adultery

he has also made human and near in these lines, called "Charity":

"Who now shall accuse and arraign us?
What man shall condemn and disown?
Since Christ has said only the stainless
Shall cast at his fellows a stone?"

That Jesus Christ died for the world, that Calvary had more meaning for humanity than anything else that has ever happened, Miller put in four lines:

"Look starward! stand far, and unearthy,
Free souled as a banner unfurled.
Be worthy! O, brother, be worthy!
For a God was the price of the world!"

He caught Christ's teaching, and the whole gist of the New Testament expressed in that immortal phrase "Judge not," and he wrote some lines that have been on the lips of man the world over, and shall continue to be as long as men speak poetry. A unique pleasure was mine on this afternoon. I had noticed something that Mrs. Miller had not noticed in this great poem. She quoted it to us:

"In men whom men condemn as ill
I find so much of goodness still;
In men whom men pronounce Divine
I find so much of sin and blot,
I hesitate to draw the line
Between the two, where God has not!"

Miller wrote it that way when he first wrote it, in his younger days. It was natural for Mrs. Miller to quote it that way. But I had discovered in his revised and complete poems that he had changed a significant phrase in that great verse. He had said, "I do not dare," in the fifth line, instead of "I hesitate." His mature years had made him say, "I do not dare to draw the line!"

God and Heaven

He knew that heaven and God were near to humanity and earth. He was not afraid of death. He teaches us all Christian courage in this line of thought. He knew that his "Greek Heights" were very near to heaven because he knew that anywhere is near to heaven to the believer:

> "Be this my home till some fair star
> Stoops earthward and shall beckon me;
> For surely God-land lies not far
> From these Greek Heights and this great sea!"

He yearned to teach men to believe in this God and his nearness; this God in whom he believed with all his heart. This cry out of his soul, written just a few days before his death, is like Tennyson's "Crossing The Bar" in that it was his swan song:

"Could I but teach man to believe,
  Could I but make small men to grow,
To break frail spider webs that weave
  About their thews and bind them low.
Could I but sing one song and lay
  Grim Doubt; I then could go my way
In tranquil silence, glad, serene,
And satisfied from off the scene.
  But Ah! this disbelief, this doubt,
This doubt of God, this doubt of God
  The damned spot will not out!
Wouldst learn to know one little flower,
  Its perfume, perfect form, or hue?
Yea, wouldst thou have one perfect hour
  Of all the years that come to you?
Then grow as God hath planted, grow
A lovely oak, or daisy low,
As he hath set his garden; be
Just what thou art, or grass or tree.
  Thy treasures up in heaven laid
Await thy sure ascending soul:
  Life after life—be not afraid!"

Yes, Miller believed in home, in Christ, and God and immortality. He believed that heaven and God were near to man, and in his last days there was no doubt. Thus his own writings confirm what Mrs. Miller, on that memorable afternoon, made certain by her warm, tear-wet, personal testimony. And as she quoted these last lines, and the sun had set behind the Golden Gate, which we could even then see from the room in which we sat, we felt as though Miller himself were near, listening as she read, listen-

ing with us. And these are the last verses that she quoted, which seem fit verses with which to close this chapter study of Joaquin Miller:

"I will my ashes to my steeps,
I will my steeps, green cross, red rose,
To those who love the beautiful,
Come, learn to be of those."

And is it any wonder that, as we sat in the twilight listening to that invitation to his home, these words made the red roses and the green cross of Christ against the hill our very own? And is it any wonder that, as she quoted these last verses we felt him near to us?

"Enough to know that I and you
Shall breathe together there as here
Some clearer, sweeter atmosphere,
Shall walk, high, wider ways above
Our petty selves, shall learn to lead
Man up and up in thought and deed.

and,

"Come here when I am far away,
Fond lovers of this lovely land,
And sit quite still and do not say,
'Turn right or left and lend a hand,'
But sit beneath my kindly trees
And gaze far out yon sea of seas.
These trees, these very stones could tell
How much I loved them and how well,
And maybe I shall come and sit
Beside you; sit so silently
You will not reck of it."

ALAN SEEGER

IV

ALAN SEEGER[1]

Poet of Youth, Beauty, Fame, Joy, Love, Death, and God

RUPERT BROOKE and Alan Seeger—so shall their names be linked together forever by those who love poetry. In the first place, they were much alike: buoyant, young; loving life, living life; and both dying for the great cause of humanity in the world's greatest war. Brooke the Englishman; Seeger the American; so are they linked. Both were but lads in their twenties; both vivid as lightning and as warm as summer sunshine in their personalities; both truly great poets, who had, even in the short time they lived, run a wide gamut of poetic expression.

I am not saying that either Brooke or Seeger may be called a Christian poet; nor am I saying that they may not be called that. This war in which they have given their lives will make a

[1]The poetical selections appearing in this chapter are used by permission, and are taken from poems by Alan Seeger. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

vast difference in the definition of what a Christian is. I can detect no orthodox Christian message in either of their dreamings, but I do find in both poets a clean, high moral message, and therefore give them place in this pulpit of the poets.

The wide range of this young American's writing astonishes the reader. He died very young: while the morning sun was just lifting its head above the eastern horizon of life; while the heavens were still crimson, and gold, and rose, and fire. What he might have written in the steady white heat of noontime and in life's glorious afternoon of experience, and in its subtle charm of "sunset and the evening star," one can only guess. But while he lived he lived; and, living, wrote. He dipped his pen in that same gold and fire of the only part of life he knew, its daybreak, and wrote. No wonder his writing was warm; no wonder he wrote of Youth, Beauty, Fame, Joy, Love, Death, and God.

The Song of Youth

Nor Byron, nor Shelley, nor Keats, nor Swinburne, nor Brooke, nor any other poet ever sounded the heights and depths and glory of Youth as did Seeger. He sang it as he

breathed it and lived it, and just as naturally. His singing of it was as rhythmic as breathing, and as sweet as the first song of an oriole in springtime. In his fifth sonnet, a form in which he loved to write and of which he was a master, he sings youth in terms "almost divine":

"Phantoms of bliss that beckon and recede—,
Thy strange allurements, City that I love,
Maze of romance, where I have followed too
The dream Youth treasures of its dearest need
And stars beyond thy towers bring tidings of."
Poems by Alan Seeger.

He loved New York; he loved Paris; he loved any city because youth and life and romance and love were there. He drank all of these into his soul like a thirsty desert drinks rain; to spring to flowers and life and color again. He drank of life and youth as a flower drinks of dew, or a bird at a city fountain, with fluttering joy, drinks, singing as it drinks. You feel all of that eagerness in "Sonnet VI" where he says:

"Where I drank deep the bliss of being young,
The strife and sweet potential flux of things
I sought Youth's dream of happiness among!"
Poems by Alan Seeger.

The Song of Beauty

And closely akin to Youth always is Beauty.

Beauty and Youth walk arm in arm everywhere, and one may even go so far as to say anywhere. Youth cares not where he goes as long as Beauty walks beside him. He will walk to the ends of the earth. Indeed, he prefers the long way home. Anybody who has known both Youth and Beauty knows this, and it need not be argued about much, thank God. And so it is most natural to find this young poet singing the lyric of Beauty even as he sings the lyric of Youth. How understandingly he addresses Beauty, and how reverently in "An Ode to Natural Beauty"!

> "Spirit of Beauty, whose sweet impulses,
> Flung like the rose of dawn across the sea,
> Alone can flush the exalted consciousness
> With shafts of sensible divinity,
> Light of the World, essential loveliness."
>
> Poems by Alan Seeger.

Then, talking about the "Wanderer" as though that character were some far off person no kin to the poet (a way that poets have to hide the pulsing of their own hearts), Seeger writes of Beauty. But we who know him cannot be made to think that this "Wanderer" is a fellow we do not know; "nor Launcelot, nor another." It is he, the poet of whom we write. It bears his imprint. It bears his trade mark.

It is stamped "with the image of the king." He cannot hide from us in this:

> "His heart the love of Beauty held as hides
> One gem most pure a casket of pure gold.
> It was too rich a lesser thing to hold;
> It was not large enough for aught besides."
>
> Poems by Alan Seeger.

The Song of Fame

Fame always lures Youth. Perhaps later experience proves that it is indeed a hollow thing, hardly worth striving for. But to Youth there is no goal that calls more insistently than Fame. Youth and Beauty and Fame—how closely akin they are! If Beauty and Fame keep him company, Youth is next the stars with delight. And so it is natural that this young poet shall sing the song of Fame with exuberant enthusiasm. He says in "The Need to Love":

> "And I have followed Fame with less devotion,
> And kept no real ambition but to see
> Rise from the foam of Nature's sunlit ocean
> My dream of palpable divinity."
>
> Poems by Alan Seeger.

And while we are listening to the music of these human stars, the music of the celestial spheres set down in human words, let us catch again the poetic echo of that third line and let

it linger long as we listen, "Rise from the foam of Nature's sunlit ocean," and

"Forget it not till the crowns are crumbled,
Till the swords of the kings are rent with rust;
Forget it not till the hills lie humbled,
And the Springs of the seas run dust,"

that, as Edwin Markham sings, this echo is the echo of the eternal poetic music.

With these wondrous lines he answers the question which he himself asks in "Fragments," "What is Success?"

"Out of the endless ore
Of deep desire to coin the utmost gold
Of passionate memory: to have lived so well
That the fifth moon, when it swims up once more
Through orchard boughs where mating orioles build
And apple trees unfold,
Find not of that dear need that all things tell
The heart unburdened nor the arms unfilled."

Poems by Alan Seeger.

Joy comes next in our treatment of the outstanding singings of this singing poet, and he himself has given us the connecting link in the following lines:

"He has drained as well
Joy's perfumed bowl and cried as I have cried:
Be Fame their mistress whom Love passes by."

Poems by Alan Seeger.

And thus smoothly we pass from Fame to Joy and hear him sing of this fourth high peak of Youth.

The Song of Joy

Whatever he did, whatever he sang, whatever he lived, this man swept all things else aside and plunged in over head. He loved to swim and he loved to dive. Perhaps into his living and his writing he carried this athletic joy also, and as he lived he lived to the full. It seems so as one reads in "I Loved" these impassioned lines:

> "From a boy
> I gloated on existence. Earth to me
> Seemed all sufficient and my sojourn there
> One trembling opportunity for joy."
>
> Poems by Alan Seeger.

And then one pauses to weep awhile, and the lines grow dim as he reads them again to know that this man, who so loved to live, who gloated on existence, who saw life as a trembling opportunity for Joy, must leave it so soon. And yet he left it nobly. Again in "An Ode to Antares" he sings of Joy:

> "What clamor importuning from every booth!
> At Earth's great market where Joy is trafficked in
> Buy while thy purse yet swells with golden Youth!"
>
> Poems by Alan Seeger.

Kindly Age, Age who had not lost his love, always sings like that to Youth; always tells Youth to live while he may, play while the play-

world is his. Every poet who has older grown, from Shakespeare to Lowell, and yet retained his love, has told us this. We expect it of older poets, but here a young poet sees it all clearly; that Youth must buy Joy while his purse is full with Youth. And ye who rob Youth of play-time, of Joy, ye capitalists, ye money makers and life destroyers, listen to this dead poet who yet lives in these words. Fathers, mothers, let childhood spend its all for Joy while the purse of Youth is full. It will be empty afterwhile and it shall never be filled again with Youth. So says the Poet.

The Song of Love

The discriminating reader of Seeger soon sees, however, that, while he sings as needs he must, because of the springs that are within him bubbling over, sings of Youth, and Beauty, and Fame, and Joy, yet he knows that these are not all of life. He knows that there are higher things than these. These higher things are Love, Death, God—what a trilogy!

Love is all. He is sure of this. He is true to this. Romantic love he knows—love of comrade, love of God. In this same "An Ode to Natural Beauty" his final conclusion is that Love is best after all:

"On any venture set, but 'twas the first
For Beauty willed them, yea whatever be
The faults I wanted wings to rise above;
I am cheered yet to think how steadfastly
I have been loyal to the love of Love!"
Poems by Alan Seeger.

This is more than romantic love; it is the "love of Love."

And lest this be not strong enough, he sings in "The Need to Love" as great a song as man ever heard on this great theme:

"The need to love that all the stars obey
Entered my heart and banished all beside.
Bare were the gardens where I used to stray;
Faded the flowers that one time satisfied."
Poems by Alan Seeger.

Then, not content, he sets up an altar of poetry and dedicates it to Love and lights a fire of worship there, and leaves it not, nor night nor day:

"All that's not love is the dearth of my days,
The leaves of the volume with rubric unwrit,
The temple in times without prayer, without praise,
The altar unset and the candle unlit."
Poems by Alan Seeger.

If Love be not queen to him, the palace is cold and barren; the "altar unset and the candle unlit."

The Song of Death

Like Brooke, a victim of the Hun, so Seeger, also a victim of the barbarian, seemed to feel

the constant presence of Death, an unseen guest at the Feast of Youth and Joy and Fame and Love. Perhaps the war made these two imaginative poets think of Death sooner than Youth usually gives him heed. But most men will think of Death when they are face to face with the shadow day and night as were these soldier-crusading poets; when they see him stalking in every trench, in every wood, on every hill and road, and in every field and village. But how bravely he spoke of Death!—

"Learn to drive fear, then, from your heart.
If you must perish, know, O man,
'Tis an inevitable part
Of the predestined plan."

Poems by Alan Seeger.

And again in this same poem, "Makatoob," he sings of Death:

"Guard that, not bowed nor blanched with fear
You enter, but serene, erect,
As you would wish most to appear
To those you most respect.

"So die, as though your funeral
Ushered you through the doors that led
Into a stately banquet hall
Where heroes banqueted;

"And it shall all depend therein
Whether you come as slave or lord,
If they acclaim you as their kin
Or spurn you from their board."

Poems by Alan Seeger.

What a challenge this is to all who must die in this war, to all lads who are giving their lives heroically in God's great cause of liberty in his world—this challenge to die so that you may be welcomed into the fraternity of heroes!

Without doubt Seeger's best-known poem, and one which illustrates also most strongly his attitude toward Death, is that poem entitled "I Have a Rendezvous With Death," from which we quote:

"I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade;
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple blossoms fill the air—
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

. . . . . .

"God knows, 'twere better to be deep
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear, . . .
But I've a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town;
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous."

Poems by Alan Seeger.

The Song of God

From the lighter thoughts of Youth, Joy, Fame, Beauty, through the "long, long

thoughts of Youth"; through Love and Death it is not a long way to climb to God. We would not expect this young poet to be thinking much in this direction, but he does just the same. I have even found those who say that he was not a God-man, but these poems refute that slander on a dead man and poet. I find him singing in "The Nympholept":

"I think it was the same: some piercing sense
Of Deity's pervasive immanence,
The life that visible Nature doth indwell
Grown great and near and all but palpable
He might not linger but with winged strides
Like one pursued, fled down the mountainsides."

Poems by Alan Seeger.

This reminds one instantly of the haunting Christ of Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven." And again in the presence of War's death the poet felt that other and greater presence without doubt, as these words prove:

"When to the last assault our bugles blow:
Reckless of pain and peril we shall go,
Heads high and hearts aflame and bayonets bare,
And we shall brave eternity as though
Eyes looked on us in which we would see fair—
One waited in whose presence we would wear,
Even as a lover who would be well-seen,
Our manhood faultless and our honor clean."

Poems by Alan Seeger.

And with magnificent acknowledgment of the divine plan of it all, of life and war and all,

he sweeps that truly great poem, "The Hosts," to a swinging climax in its last tremendous stanza; which, fitting too, shall be the closing lines of this chapter on our dead American, martyred poet.

He first speaks of the marching columns of soldiers as "Big with the beauty of cosmic things. Mark how their columns surge!"

> "With bayonets bare and flags unfurled,
> They scale the summits of the world—"
>
> Poems by Alan Seeger.

And then:

> "There was a stately drama writ
> By the hand that peopled the earth and air
> And set the stars in the infinite
> And made night gorgeous and morning fair,
> And all that had sense to reason knew
> That bloody drama must be gone through."
>
> Poems by Alan Seeger.

ENGLISH POETS

John Oxenham
Alfred Noyes
John Masefield
Robert Service
Rupert Brooke

JOHN OXENHAM

V

JOHN OXENHAM[1]

Who Makes Articulate the Voice of War, Peace, the Cross, the Christ

IN the first volume of The Student in Arms, that widely read book of the war, Donald Hankey has a chapter on "The Religion of the Inarticulate," in which he shows that the "Tommy" who for so long has been accused of having no religion, really has a very definite one. He has a religion that embraces all the Christian virtues, such as love, sacrifice, brotherhood, and comradeship, but he has never connected these with either Christ or the church. His religion is the "Religion of the Inarticulate." Hankey then shows that this war is articulating religion as never before.

John Oxenham, Poet-Preacher, is giving articulation to the voice of Christianity—a

[1]The poetical selections appearing in this chapter are used by permission, and are taken from the following works: The Vision Splendid, All's Well, and The Fiery Cross. Published by George H. Doran Company, New York.

voice ringing out from over and above the thunder of the guns, the blare, the flare, the outcry, the hurt, the pain and anguish of the most awful war that earth has ever suffered. Some of us have been thinking of this war in terms of Christian hope. We have thought that we see in it a new Calvary out of which shall come a new resurrection to the spiritual world. We have dreamed that men are being redeemed through the sacrifice, through the spirit of service and brotherhood thrust upon the world by war's supreme demands. We have thought all of this, but we have not been able to make it articulate. Now comes a poet to do it for us.

What magnificent hope sings out, even in the titles that Oxenham has selected for his books in these days of darkness, anguish and lostness. After his first book, Bees in Amber, comes that warm handclasp of strength: that thrill of hope; that word of a watchman in the night, like a sentinel crying through the very title of his second book, "All's Well." Then came The Vision Splendid, and soon we are to have The Fiery Cross. The publishers were kind enough to let me examine this last book while it was still in the proof sheets. It is the one great hope book of the war. Every mother

and father who has a boy in the war, every wife who has a husband, every child who has a father will thrill with a new pride and a new dignity after reading The Fiery Cross.

War and Its Voice

No poet has voiced America's reasons for being in the war as has Oxenham, and nowhere does he do it better than in "Where Are You Going, Great-Heart?" the concluding stanza of which sums up compactly America's high purposes:

> "Where are you going, Great-Heart?
> 'To set all burdened peoples free;
> To win for all God's liberty;
> To 'stablish His sweet Sovereignty.'
> God goeth with you, Great-Heart!"
>
> The Vision Splendid.

To those who go to die in war the poet addresses himself in lines which he titles "On Eagle Wings":

> "Higher than most, to you is given
> To live—or in His time, to die;
> So, bear you as White Knights of Heaven—
> The very flower of chivalry!
> Take Him as Pilot by your side,
> And 'All is well' whate'er betide."
>
> The Vision Splendid.

"If God be with you, who can be against

you?" is the echo that we hear going and coming behind these great Christian lines. Indeed, behind every poem that Oxenham writes we can hear the echoes of some great scriptural word of promise, or hope or faith or courage. The Christian, as well as those who never saw the Bible or a church, will feel at home with this poet anywhere. The advantage that the Christian will have in reading him is that he will understand him better.

Turning to those who stay at home and have lost loved ones, with what sympathy and deep, tender understanding does he write in "To You Who Have Lost." You may almost see a great kindly father standing by your side, his warm hand in yours as he sings:

"I know! I know!—
The ceaseless ache, the emptiness, the woe—
The pang of loss—
The strength that sinks beneath so sore a cross.
'Heedless and careless, still the world wags on,
And leaves me broken, . . . Oh, my son! my son!'"

"Yea—think of this!—
Yea, rather think on this!—
He died as few men get the chance to die—
Fighting to save a world's morality.
He died the noblest death a man may die,
Fighting for God, and Right, and Liberty—
And such a death is Immortality."

All's Well.

If those who have lost loved ones "Over

There" cannot be buoyed by that, I know not what will buoy them, what will comfort.

Oxenham too gives us a picture of a battlefield where birds sing and roses bloom, just as do Service and several other poets who have been in the midst of the conflict. We have become familiar with this picture, but no writer yet has caught its full, eternal meaning and pressed it down into three lines for the world as has this man; in "Here, There, and Everywhere":

> "Man proposes—God disposes;
> Yet our hope in Him reposes
> Who in war-time still makes roses."
>
> The Fiery Cross.

But this poet in his interpretation of war does not forget peace; does not forget that it is coming; does not forget that the world is hungry for it; does not forget that it is the duty of the poets and the thinking men and women of the world not only to get ready for it, but to lead the way to it.

Peace and Its Voice

In a remarkable poem called "Watchman! What of the Night?" we see this great heart standing sentinel on the walls of the world, watching the midnight skies red with the blaze and glow of carnage:

"Watchman! What of the night?
No light we see;
Our souls are bruised and sickened with the sight
Of this foul crime against humanity.
The Ways are dark—
'I SEE THE MORNING LIGHT!'

. . . . . .

"Beyond the war-clouds and the reddened ways,
I see the promise of the Coming Days!
I see His sun rise, new charged with grace,
Earth's tears to dry and all her woes efface!
Christ lives! Christ loves! Christ rules!
No more shall Might,
Though leagued with all the forces of the Night,
Ride over Right. No more shall Wrong
The world's gross agonies prolong.
Who waits His time shall surely see
The triumph of His Constancy;
When, without let, or bar, or stay,
The coming of His Perfect Day
Shall sweep the Powers of Night away;
And Faith replumed for nobler flight,
And Hope aglow with radiance bright,
And Love in loveliness bedight
SHALL GREET THE MORNING LIGHT."

All's Well.

Then, as is most fair and logical, the poet tells us how we are to build again after peace comes. We must needs know that. The newspapers are full of a certain popular move—and success to it—to rebuild the destroyed cities of France and Belgium. But the rebuilding that the poet speaks of in "The Winnowing" is a deeper thing. It is a spiritual rebuilding without which there is no permanent peace in

the world and no permanent safety for the material world.

"How shall we start, Lord, to build life again,
Fairer and sweeter, and freed from its pain?
'Build ye in Me and your building shall be
Builded for Time and Eternity.'"

All's Well.

There is the answer to the world's cry in short, sharp, succinct lines; compact as a biblical phrase; and as meaningful. Hearken it, ye world! Only in Him can the new spiritual world be built for "Time and Eternity." And only to those who so believe and hold shall the world belong henceforth. At least so says our poet:

"To whom shall the world henceforth belong
And who shall go up and possess it?"

which question he himself answers in the same verse:

"To the Men of Good Fame
Who everything claim—
This world and the next—in their Master's great name—

"To these shall the world henceforth belong,
And they shall go up and possess it;
Overmuch, overlong, has the world suffered wrong,
We are here by God's help to redress it."

The Fiery Cross.

And finally in this fight for peace he does not forget prayer, and in "The Prayer Immortal," which is introduced, as are so many of

Oxenham's poems, by a phrase from the Bible, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," he admonishes those who seek peace:

"So—to your knees—
And, with your heart and soul, pray God
That wars may cease,
And earth, by His good will,
Through these rough ways, find peace!"

The Fiery Cross.

The Cross and Its Voice

The voice of the cross of Calvary is being heard this day of war as it has never been heard before. The world is resonant with its message. Every soldier, every nation, every home, every mother and father and child and wife who has suffered because of this war, shall henceforth understand the Christ and his cross the better. All through this writer's interpretations of the war we find the cross to the fore. To him the cross symbolizes the war. This war is the cross in a deep and abiding sense. In "Through the Valley" he says:

"And there of His radiant company,
Full many a one I see,
Who has won through the Valley of Shadows
To the larger liberty.
Even there in the grace of the heavenly place,
It is joy to meet mine own,
And to know that not one but has valiantly won,
By the way of the Cross, his crown."

The Vision Splendid.

Thank God for that hope! Thank God for that word!

In "The Ballad of Jim Baxter" this same thought is more vividly and strongly set forth. It is the story of one type of German cruelty of which we have heard in the war dispatches several times and that have been confirmed on the spot; the story of the Germans nailing men to crosses. Jim Baxter suffered this experience:

> "When Jim came to, he found himself
> Nailed to a cross of wood,
> Just like the Christs you find out there
> On every country road.
>
> "He wondered dully if he'd died,
> And so, become a Christ;
> 'Perhaps,' he thought, 'all men are Christs
> When they are crucified.'"
>
> The Vision Splendid.

And in this homely lad's homely way of putting his cruel experience who knows but that there may be such truth as yet we cannot see in the dark chaos of war?

The Christ and His Voice

It isn't a far step from the cross to the Christ of the cross, and in this man's poetry the two mingle and commingle so closely that one overlaps the other. But always these two things

stand out—the cross and the Christ. And in the new volume, The Fiery Cross, one finds many pages devoted to this great thought alone.

Of the tenderness of the Christ he speaks most sympathetically, having in mind again the lads that war has taken. In "The Master's Garden" hear him:

> "And some, with wondrous tenderness,
> To His lips He gently pressed,
> And fervent blessings breathed on them,
> And laid them in His breast."
>
> The Vision Splendid.

And then of his sweetness, referring again to the "Jim Baxter," we have a wonderful picture of the oft mentioned Comrade in White, who is so real to the wounded soldiers:

> "His face was wondrous pitiful,
> But still more wondrous sweet;
> And Jim saw holes just like his own
> In His white hands and feet;
> But His look it was that won Jim's heart,
> It was so wondrous sweet.
>
> "'Christ!'—said the dying man once more,
> With accent reverent,
> He had never said it so before,
> But he knew now what Christ meant—"
>
> The Vision Splendid.

Oxenham has great faith in humanity. From time to time we find him expressing man's

kinship with the stars and with God and Christ. "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels" this poet takes seriously, thank God. This word from the Book means something to him. And so it is in a poem called "In Every Man" we see him finding Christ in every man:

"In every soul of all mankind
Somewhat of Christ I find,
Somewhat of Christ—and Thee;
For in each one there surely dwells
That something which most surely spells
Life's immortality.

. . . . . .

"And so, for love of Christ—and Thee,
I will not cease to seek and find,
In all mankind,
That hope of immortality
Which dwells so sacramentally
In Christ—and Thee."

The Fiery Cross.

He feels Christ's eternity so much that he cries out for him continually and will not be satisfied without him. He knows that he must have the Christ if he wants to grow great enough to meet life's demands. In a poem, "A Prayer for Enlargement," which I quote in full because of its brevity, one feels this dependence:

"Shrive me of all my littleness and sin!
Open your great heart wide!
Open it wide and take me in,
For the sake of Christ who died!

"Was I grown small and strait?—
Then shalt Thou make me wide.
Through the love of Christ who died,
Thou—thou shalt make me great."

The Fiery Cross.

To the Christian the following quotation will mean much. In it we hear the echo of Masefield's The Everlasting Mercy; or of that marvelous story of the regeneration of a human soul in Tolstoy's The Resurrection; an old-fashioned conversion of a human being; a Paul's on the road to Damascus experience. And the tragedy is that just about the time that the world of literature is being fascinated with this story of "Rebirth" the church seems to be forgetting it. It is told in the first verse of Ex Tenebris—"The Lay of the King Who Rose Again":

"Take away my rage!
Take away my sin!
Strip me all bare
Of that I did wear—
The foul rags, the base rags,
The rude and the mean!
Strip me, yea strip me
Right down to my skin!
Strip me all bare
Of that I have been!
Then wash me in water,
In fair running water,
Wash me without,
And wash me within,

In fair running water,
In fresh running water,
Wash me, ah wash me,
And make me all clean!
—Clean of the soilure
And clean of the sin,
—Clean of the soul-crushing
Sense of defilure,
—Clean of the old self,
And clean of the sin!
In fair running water,
In fresh running water,
In sun-running water,
All sweet and all pure,
Wash me, ah wash me,
And I shall be clean."

The Fiery Cross.

God and His Voice

From the voice of Christ and the voice of the cross it is not far to hear the voice of God either in life or in John Oxenham's books. Behind the cross and behind the Christ stands the Father, and a treatment of this great poet's writings would not be complete if one did not quote a few excerpts from his writings to show that God was ever present "keeping watch above his own."

The first note we catch of the Father's voice is in "The Call of the Dead":

"One way there is—one only—
Whereby ye may stand sure;
One way by which ye may understand
All foes, and Life's High Ways command,
And make your building sure.—

Take God once more as Counselor,
Work with Him, hand in hand,
Build surely, in His Grace and Power,
The nobler things that shall endure,
And, having done all,—STAND!"

The Vision Splendid.

And as the poet has walked the streets of America and elsewhere and has seen the service flag, which in "Each window shrines a name," he has felt God everywhere. In "The Leaves of the Golden Book" he comforts those who mourn:

"God will gather all these scattered
Leaves into His Golden Book,
Torn and crumpled, soiled and battered,
He will heal them with a look.
Not one soul of them has perished;
No man ever yet forsook
Wife and home, and all he cherished,
And God's purpose undertook,
But he met his full reward
In the 'Well Done' of his Lord!"

The Vision Splendid.

So it is that over and over we hear this note, wrung from the experiences of war, that those who give up all, to die for God's plan, to take the cross in suffering that the world may be better; these shall have life eternal. And who dares to dispute it?

In "Our Share" we are admonished that we must find God anew:

"Heads of sham gold and feet of crumbling clay,
If we would build anew and build to stay,
We must find God again,
And go His way."

All's Well.

Oxenham does not claim to fully understand the world cataclysm any more than some of the rest of us. If we all had to understand, we might find ourselves ineligible for the Kingdom, but the Book says everywhere, "He that believeth on me shall have everlasting life." And we can believe whether we understand or no. So voices the poet in "God's Handwriting":

"He writes in characters too grand
For our short sight to understand;
We catch but broken strokes, and try
To fathom all the mystery
Of withered hopes, of deaths, of life,
The endless war, the useless strife,—
But there, with larger, clearer sight,
We shall see this—
HIS WAY WAS RIGHT."

All's Well.

What better way to close this brief interpretation of our poet in this day of darkness and hate and hurt and war and woe and want, of seeing hopelessness and helplessness, than with these heartening lines from "God Is":

"God is;
God sees;
God loves;
God knows.

And Right is Right;
And Right is Might.
In the full ripeness of His Time,
All these His vast prepotencies
Shall round their grace-work to the prime
Of full accomplishment,
And we shall see the plan sublime
Of His beneficent intent.
Live on in hope!
Press on in faith!
Love conquers all things,
Even Death."

All's Well.

ALFRED NOYES

VI

ALFRED NOYES[1]

A Study of Childhood, of Manhood, Christhood, and Godhood

IF one wants to find the tenderest, most completely sympathetic study of childhood, one that finds echo not only in the heart of the grown-up, but in the heart of children the world over, he must this day go to Alfred Noyes. If you want proof of this, read "The Forest of Wild Thyme" or "The Flower of Old Japan" to your children and watch them sit with open mouths and open hearts to hear these wonder fairy tales. And, further, if you are too grown-up to want to read Noyes for his complete sympathy with childhood, more universal even than our beloved Riley; and you want a poet that challenges you to a more vigorous manhood, a poet who calls man to his highest and deepest virility, read Noyes. Or, if you happen to need a clearer, firmer insight

[1]The poetical selections appearing in this chapter are used by permission, and are taken from Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes, two volumes, copyright, 1913, by the Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York.

into the man of Galilee and Calvary, read Noyes; and, finally, if you want firmer, more rocklike foundations to plant your faith in God upon, read Noyes, for herein one finds all of these. From childhood to Godhood is, indeed, a wide range for a poet to take, and yet they are akin.

As another poet has said, none less than Edwin Markham, "Know man and you will know the deep of God." And as Noyes himself says in the introduction to "The Forest of Wild Thyme":

> "Husband, there was a happy day,
> Long ago in love's young May,
> When, with a wild-flower in your hand
> You echoed that dead poet's cry—
> 'Little flower, but if I could understand!'
> And you saw it had roots in the depth of the sky,
> And there in that smallest bud lay furled
> The secret and meaning of all the world."
>
> Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And when we know that the mother was talking about "Little Peterkin," their lost baby, we know that she meant that in a little child there lay furled "The secret and meaning of all the world."

And so, beginning with childhood, through those intermediate steps of manhood and Christhood, with Noyes leading us, as he literally leads the little tots through the mysteries

of Old Japan and the Wild Thyme, let us go from tree to tree, and flower to flower, and hope to hope, and pain to pain, up to God, from whence we came. It is a clear sweet pathway that he leads us.

Childhood and Its Glory

Noyes assumes something that we all know for truth: that "Grown-ups do not understand" childhood. But after reading this sweet poet we know that he does understand; and we thank God for him. In Part II of "The Forest of Wild Thyme" one sees this clearly.

> "O, grown-ups cannot understand,
> And grown-ups never will,
> How short's the way to fairyland
> Across the purple hill:
> They smile: their smile is very bland,
> Their eyes are wise and chill;
> And yet—at just a child's command—
> The world's an Eden still."
>
> Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

Thank the stars that watch over us in love that the great-hearted poets, and the children of the world—at least those little ones that a half-way Christian civilization has not robbed of childhood—know that "The world's an Eden still."

From the prelude to "The Flower of Old

Japan" comes that same note, like a bluebird in springtime, that note of belief, of trust, of hope:

"Do you remember the blue stream;
The bridge of pale bamboo;
The path that seemed a twisted dream
Where everything came true;
The purple cheery-trees; the house
With jutting eaves below the boughs;
The mandarins in blue,
With tiny tapping, tilted toes,
With curious curved mustachios?

. . . .

"Ah, let us follow, follow far
Beyond the purple seas;
Beyond the rosy foaming bar,
The coral reef, the trees,
The land of parrots and the wild
That rolls before the fearless child
In ancient mysteries:
Onward, and onward if we can,
To Old Japan, to Old Japan."

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And "The Forest of Wild Thyme" is full of the echos of fairy tales and childhood rhymes heard the world over. Little Peterkin, who went with the children to "Old Japan," is dead now:

"Come, my brother pirates, I am tired of play;
Come and look for Peterkin, little brother Peterkin,
Our merry little comrade that the fairies took away."

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And so, they go to the last place they saw

him, the old God's Acre, and fall asleep amid the wild thyme blooming there. As they dream the thyme grows to the size of trees, and they wander about in the forest hunting for Peterkin.

As they hunted they found out who killed Cock Robin. They appeal to Little Boy Blue to help them hunt for Peterkin:

"Little Boy Blue, you are gallant and brave,
There was never a doubt in those clear, bright eyes.
Come, challenge the grim, dark Gates of the Grave
As the skylark sings to those infinite skies!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

The King of Fairyland gives command to Pease-Blossom:

"And cried, Pease-blossom, Mustard-Seed! You know the old command;
Well; these are little children; you must lead them on to Peterkin!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

They even discovered, as they were led on by Pease-Blossom and Mustard-Seed, how fairies were born:

"Men upon earth
Bring us to birth
Gently at even and morn!
When as brother and brother
They greet one another
And smile—then a fairy is born!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And, too, they found why fairies die:

"But at each cruel word
Upon earth that is heard,
Each deed of unkindness or hate,
Some fairy must pass
From the games in the grass
And steal through the terrible Gate."

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And they learned what it took to make a rose:

" 'What is there hid in the heart of a rose,
Mother-mine?'
'Ah, who knows, who knows, who knows?
A man that died on a lonely hill
May tell you perhaps, but none other will,
Little child.'

" 'What does it take to make a rose,
Mother-mine?'
'The God that died to make it knows.
It takes the world's eternal wars,
It takes the moon and all the stars,
It takes the might of heaven and hell
And the everlasting Love as well,
Little child.' "

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And they heard the old tales over:

"And 'See-Saw: Margery Daw,' we heard a rollicking shout,
As the swing boats hurtled over our heads to the tune of the roundabout;
And 'Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn,' we heard the showmen cry,
And 'Dickery Dock, I'm as good as a clock,' we heard the swings reply."

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

Then at last they found their little brother Peterkin in "The Babe of Bethlehem."

And if this were not enough to make the reader see how completely and wholly and sympathetically Noyes understood the child heart, hear this word from his great soul:

"Kind little eyes that I love,
Eyes forgetful of mine,
In a dream I am bending above
Your sleep and you open and shine;
And I know as my own grow blind
With a lonely prayer for your sake,
He will hear—even me—little eyes that were kind,
God bless you, asleep or awake!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

Manhood and Its Vigor

Virility like unto steel is the very mark of Noyes. But as this study of Childhood has shown, it is a virility touched with tenderness. As Bayard Taylor sings:

"The bravest are the tenderest,
The loving are the daring!"

And this is Noyes. Noyes knew Manhood, he sang it, he challenged it too, he crowned it in "Drake"; he placed it a little lower than the gods. Hear this supreme word, enough to lift man to the skies:

"Where, what a dreamer yet, in spite of all,
Is man, that splendid visionary child
Who sent his fairy beacon through the dusk!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

This tribute to Marlow—how eaglelike it is! How suggestive of heights, and mountain peaks and blue skies and far-flung stars!

"But he who dared the thunder-roll,
Whose eagle-wings could soar,
Buffeting down the clouds of night,
To beat against the Light of Light,
That great God-blinded eagle-soul,
We shall not see him more!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

Then he makes us one with all that is granite and flower and high and holy in "The Loom of the Years":

"One with the flower of a day, one with the withered moon,
One with the granite mountains that melt into the noon,
One with the dream that triumphs beyond the light of the spheres,
We come from the Loom of the Weaver, that weaves the Web of the Years."

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

From "Drake" again this ringing word:

"His face was like a king's face as he spake,
For sorrows that strike deep reveal the deep;
And through the gateways of a ragged wound
Sometimes a God will drive his chariot wheels
From some deep heaven within the hearts of men!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

Christhood and Its Calvary

From childhood to manhood through Christhood to Godhood is a progression that Noyes sees clearly and makes us see as clearly. Some-

how Christ is very real to Noyes. He is not a historical character far off. He is the Christ of here and now; the Christ that meets our every need; as real as a dearly beloved friend next door to us. No poet sees the Christ more clearly.

First he caught the meanings of Christ's gospel of new birth. He was not confused on that. He knows:

"The task is hard to learn
While all the songs of Spring return
Along the blood and sing.

"Yet hear—from her deep skies,
How Art, for all your pain, still cries,
Ye must be born again!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And who could put his worship more beautifully than the poet does in "The Symbolist"?

"Help me to seek that unknown land!
I kneel before the shrine.
Help me to feel the hidden hand
That ever holdeth mine.

"I kneel before the Word, I kneel
Before the Cross of flame.
I cry, as through the gloom I steal,
The glory of the Name."

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

Christ's face, and his life experiences, here and there slip out of the lines of this English poet with an insistence that cannot but win the

heart of the world, especially the heart of the Christian. Here and there in the most unexpected places his living presence stands before you, with, to use another of the poet's own lines, "Words that would make the dead arise," as in "Vicisti, Galilee":

"Poor, scornful Lilliputian souls,
And are ye still too proud
To risk your little aureoles
By kneeling with the crowd?

. . . . . .

"And while ye scoff, on every side
Great hints of Him go by,—
Souls that are hourly crucified
On some new Calvary!"

. . . . . .

"In flower and dust, in chaff and grain,
He binds Himself and dies!
We live by His eternal pain,
His hourly sacrifice."

. . . . . .

"And while ye scoff from shore to shore
From sea to moaning sea,
'Eloi, eloi,' goes up once more,
'Lama sabachthani!'
The heavens are like a scroll unfurled,
The writing flames above—
This is the King of all the World
Upon His Cross of Love!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And there in the very midst of "Drake," that poem of a great sea fighter, comes this quatrain unexpectedly, showing the Christ always in the background of the poet's mind. He uses the

Christ eagerly as a figure, as a help to his thought. He always puts the Christ and his cross to the fore:

"Whence came the prentice carpenter whose voice
Hath shaken kingdoms down, whose menial gibbet
Rises triumphant o'er the wreck of Empires
And stretches out its arms amongst the Stars?"
Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

Then in "The Old Skeptic" we hear these of the Christ in the concluding lines:

"I will go back to my home and look at the wayside flowers,
And hear from the wayside cabin the kind old hymns again,
Where Christ holds out His arms in the quiet evening hours,
And the light of the chapel porches broods on the peaceful lane.

"And there I shall hear men praying the deep old foolish prayers,
And there I shall see once more, the fond old faith confessed,
And the strange old light on their faces who hear as a blind man hears—
'Come unto me, ye weary, and I will give you rest.'

"I will go back and believe in the deep old foolish tales,
And pray the simple prayers that I learned at my mother's knee,
Where the Sabbath tolls its peace, through the breathless mountain-vales,
And the sunset's evening hymn hallows the listening sea."
Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

Godhood at Last and Surely

He finds God. There is no uncertainty about

it. From childhood to Godhood has the poet come, and we have come with him. It has been a triumphant journey upward. But we have not been afraid. Even the blinding light of God's face has not made us tremble. We have learned to know him through this climb upward and upward to his throne.

At first it was uncertain. The poet had to challenge us to one great end in "The Paradox":

"But one thing is needful; and ye shall be true
To yourself and the goal and the God that ye seek;
Yea, the day and the night shall requite it to you
If ye love one another, if your love be not weak!"
Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

For he knew the heart hunger for God that was in every human breast:

"I am full-fed, and yet
I hunger!
Who set this fiercer famine in my maw?
Who set this fiercer hunger in my heart?"
Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

From "Drake" comes that scintillating line: "A scribble of God's finger in the sky"; and an admonition to the preacher: "Thou art God's minister, not God's oracle!"

Nor did he forget that man, in his search for God, is, after all, but man, and weak! So from "Tales of a Mermaid Tavern":

". . . and of that other Ocean
Where all men sail so blindly, and misjudge
Their friends, their charts, their storms, their stars, their *God!*"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

Even like unto "Bo'sin Bill," who was and is a prevalent type, but not a serious type—that man who claims to be an atheist, but in times of stress, like unto us all, turns to God. And what humorous creatures we are! enough to make God smile, if he did not love us so much:

"But our bo'sin Bill was an atheist still
Ex-cept—sometimes—in the dark!"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And again from "The Paradox":

"Flashing forth as a flame,
The unnameable Name,
The ineffable Word,
I am the Lord!"

"I am the End to which the whole world strives:
Therefore are ye girdled with a wild desire and shod
With sorrow; for among you all no soul
Shall ever cease, or sleep, or reach its goal
Of union and communion with the Whole
Or rest content with less than being God."

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

And thus we find God, with Noyes. And I have saved for the last quotation one from "The Origin of Life," which the poet says is "Written in answer to certain scientific theories." I save it for the last because,

strangely, it sums up all the journey that we have passed through, from childhood to Godhood:

"Watched the great hills like clouds arise and set,
And one—named Olivet;
When you have seen as a shadow passing away,
One child clasp hands and pray;
When you have seen emerge from that dark mire
One martyr ringed with fire;
Or, from that Nothingness, by special grace
One woman's love-lit face . . ."

. . . . . .

"Dare you re-kindle then,
One faith for faithless men,
And say you found, on that dark road you trod,
In the beginning, *God?*"

Collected Poems by Alfred Noyes.

JOHN MASEFIELD

VII

JOHN MASEFIELD, POET FOR THE PULPIT[1]

TO climb is to achieve. We like to see men achieve; and the harder that achievement is, the more we thrill to it. For that reason we all have a hope to climb a Shasta, or a Whitney, or a Hood to its whitest peak, and glory in the achievement. And because of this human delight in the climb we thrill to see a man climb out of sin, or out of difficulty, or out of defeat to triumph.

From "bar-boy" to poet is a great achievement, a great climb, or leap, or lift, whichever figure you may prefer, but that is exactly what John Masefield did.

Perhaps Hutton's figure may describe it better—"The Leap to God." At least ten years ago John Masefield, a wanderer on the face of the earth, found himself in New York city without friends and without means, and it was not to him an unusual thing to accept the posi-

[1]The poetical selections appearing in this chapter are used by permission, and are taken from the following works: The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street, Salt Water Poems and Ballads, and Good Friday, published by The Macmillan Company, New York.

tion of "bar-boy" in a New York saloon. This particular profession has within its scope the duties of wiping the beer bottles, sweeping the floor, and other menial tasks.

And now John Masefield has within recent months come to New York city to be the lauded and feted. Newspaper reporters met him as his boat landed, eager for his every word; Carnegie Hall was crowded to hear him read from his own poetry; and his journey across the country was just a great triumph from New York to San Francisco.

Something had happened in those ten years. This man had achieved. This poet had climbed to God. This man had experienced the "Soul's Leap to God." He had found that Man of all men who once said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." He always lifts men out of nothing into the glory of the greatest achievement. Yes, something had happened in those ten years.

And the things that had happened in those ten years are perfectly apparent in his writings if one follow them from the beginning to the end. And the things that had happened I shall trace through this poet's writings from the first, boyhood verses of "Salt Water Ballads" to "Good Friday"; and therein lies the secret; and

incidentally therein lies some of the most thrilling human touches, vivid illustrations for the preacher; some of the most intensely interesting religious experiences that any biography ever revealed consciously or unconsciously.

I. The Soul Psychology of His Youth in "Salt Water Ballads"

One may search these "Salt Water Ballads" through from the opening line of "Consecration" to "The Song At Parting" and find no faint suggestion of that deep religious glory of "The Everlasting Mercy." This book was written, even as Masefield says, "in my boyhood; all of it in my youth." He has not caught the deeper meaning of life yet—the spiritual meaning—although he has caught the social meaning, just as Markham has caught it.

1. *Social Consciousness*

Even in "Consecration" we hear the challenging ring of a young voice who has wandered over the face of the earth and has taken his place with the "Outcast," has cast his lot with the sailor, the stoker, the tramp.

"Not the ruler for me, but the ranker, the tramp of the road,
The slave with the sack on his shoulders pricked on with the goad,
The man with too weighty a burden, too weary a load.

"Others may sing of the wine and the wealth, and the mirth,
The portly presence of potentates goodly in girth;
Mine be the dirt and the dross, the dust, and the scum of
the earth!

. . . . . .

"Mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mould.
Of the maimed, of the halt and the blind in the rain and
the cold—
Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tales be told.
Amen."

Salt Water Poems and Ballads.

And it is a most fascinating story to see him climb from his boyhood, purely social, sympathetic interest in the outcast to that higher, that highest social consciousness, vitalized with religion. Here, seems it to me, that those who possess true social consciousness must come at last if they do their most effective work for the social regeneration of the world. Many have tremendous social consciousness, but no Christ. Christ himself is the very pulse beat of the social regeneration. Without him it must fail.

One feels, even here in his youth poems, however, a promise of that deeper Masefield that later finds his soul in "The Everlasting Mercy."

2. *Faith in Immortality*

In "Rest Her Soul," these haunting lines with that expression of a deep faith found in "All that dies of her," we find a ray of light, which

slants through a small window of the man that is to be:

"On the black velvet covering her eyes
Let the dull earth be thrown;
Her's is the mightier silence of the skies,
And long, quiet rest alone.
Over the pure, dark, wistful eyes of her,
O'er all the human, all that dies of her,
Gently let flowers be strown."

Salt Water Poems and Ballads.

San Francisco
Theological
Alcove
Case
Shelf

But most of these ballads, as their title suggests, are nothing more than the very sea foam of which they speak, and whose tale they tell; as compared with that later, deeper verse of Christian hope and regeneration.

And then pass those ten years; ten years following the period of "The Salt Water Ballads"; and ten years following the time when he was a "bar-boy" in New York; ten years in which he climbs from a simple "social consciousness" to a social consciousness that has the heart beat of Christ in its every line. The poems he writes in this period are all of the Christ. "Good Friday," perhaps the strongest poem dealing with this great day in Christ's life, is full of a close knowledge of the spirit of the Man of Galilee. But it is in "The Everlasting Mercy" and not "The Story of a Round House" that we find Masefield at his big best, battering at the very doors of eternity with

the fist of a giant and the tender love of a woman, and the plea of a penitent sinner.

Something had happened to Masefield in those ten years. A man's entire life had been revolutionized; and his poetry with it. He still feels the want and need of the world, and the social injustice; but he has found the cure. In a word, he has been converted. I do not care whether or no Masefield means to tell his own story in "The Everlasting Mercy," but I do know that he tells, in spite of himself, a story that fits curiously into, and marvelously explains, the strange revolution and change in his own life from "Salt Water Ballads" to "Good Friday."

II. Conversion

It is an old-fashioned Methodist conversion of which he tells, which links itself up with the New Testament gospel of the regeneration of a human soul in such a fascinating way that it gives those of us who preach this gospel an impelling, modern, dramatic putting of the old, old story, that will thrill our congregations and grip the hearts of men who know not the Christ.

1. *Conviction of Sin*

Saul Kane was an amateur prizefighter. He and his friend Bill have a fight in the opening

lines of the tale, and Saul wins. This victory is followed by the usual debauch, which lasts until all the drunken crowd are asleep on the floor of the "Lion." No Russian novelist, nor a Dostoievesky, nor another, ever dared such realism as Masefield has given us in his picture of this night's sin. He makes sin all that it is—black and hideous:

"From three long hours of gin and smokes,
And two girls' breath and fifteen blokes,
A warmish night and windows shut
The room stank like a fox's gut.
The heat, and smell, and drinking deep
Began to stun the gang to sleep."

The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street.

But this was too much for Saul Kane. He had still enough decency left to be ashamed. He wanted air. He went to a window and threw it open:

"I opened window wide and leaned
Out of that pigsty of the fiend,
And felt a cool wind go like grace
About the sleeping market-place.
The clock struck three, and sweetly, slowly,
The bells chimed, Holy, Holy, Holy;
And in a second's pause there fell
The cold note of the chapel bell,
And then a cock crew flapping wings,
And summat made me think of things!"

The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street.

There it is: sin, and conviction of sin. Perhaps he thought of another man who had vir-

tually betrayed the Christ, and the cock crew and made that other "think o' things."

Then came the reaction from that conviction; the battle against that same conviction that he must give up sin and surrender to the Christ; and a terrific battle it is, and a terrific description of that battle Masefield gives us, lightninglike in its vividness until there comes the little woman of God, Miss Bourne (a deaconess, if you please), who has always known the better man in Saul, who has followed him with her Christly love like "The Hound of Heaven." And how tenderly, yet how insistently, how pleadingly she speaks:

> "'Saul Kane,' she said, 'when next you drink,
> Do me the gentleness to think
> That every drop of drink accursed
> Makes Christ within you die of thirst;
> That every dirty word you say
> Is one more flint upon His way,
> Another thorn about His head,
> Another mock by where He tread;
> Another nail another cross;
> All that you are is that Christ's loss.'"
>
> **The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street.**

These searching words were beyond defeat. They went home to his already convicted heart and mind like arrows. They hurt. They cut. They awakened. They called. They pierced. They pounded with giant fists. They lashed

like spiked whips. They burned like a soul on fire. They clamored, and they whispered like a mother's love, and at last his heart opened:

2. *Forgiveness*

"I know the very words I said,
They bayed like bloodhounds in my head.
'The water's going out to sea
And there's a great moon calling me;
But there's a great sun calls the moon,
And all God's bells will carol soon
For joy and glory, and delight
Of some one coming home to-night.'"
The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street.

And then came the consciousness that he was "done with sin" forever:

"I knew that I had done with sin,
I knew that Christ had given me birth
To brother all the souls on earth,"
The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street.

which was followed by two "glories"—the "Glory of the Lighted Mind" and the "Glory of the Lighted Soul." I think that perhaps in our preaching on conversion we make too little of the regeneration of the "mind." Masefield does not miss one whit of a complete regeneration.

3. *The Joy of Conversion*

"O glory of the lighted mind.
How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind!

The station brook to my new eyes
Was babbling out of Paradise,
The waters rushing from the rain
Were singing, 'Christ has risen again!'"
The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street.

And then the soul glory:

"O glory of the lighted Soul.
The dawn came up on Bradlow Knoll,
The dawn with glittering on the grasses,
The dawn which pass and never passes."
The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street.

But that wasn't all. Masefield knows that the other self must be completely eradicated, so he makes Saul Kane change his environment entirely. He goes to the country. He plows, and as he plows he learns the lesson of the soil and cries:

"O Jesus, drive the coulter deep
To plow my living man from sleep."
The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street.

And more word from Christ as he plowed:

"I knew that Christ was there with Callow,
That Christ was standing there with me,
That Christ had taught me what to be,
That I should plow and as I plowed
My Saviour Christ would sing aloud,
And as I drove the clods apart
Christ would be plowing in my heart,
Through rest-harrow and bitter roots,
Through all my bad life's rotten fruits."
The Everlasting Mercy and the Widow in the Bye Street.

And so it is, that beginning with his poems

of youth, John Masefield starts out with a sympathetic social consciousness, but nothing more apparently. He brothers with the outcast and frankly prefers it. Then comes the great regenerating influence in his life, which we surely find in his expression of faith that the soul is immortal, and finally that upheaval which we call conversion with all of its incident steps from conviction of sin to repentance; and then to the consciousness of forgiveness; to the lighted mind and the lighted soul; and then to the uprooting of evil and the planting of good in the soil of his life. And so through Saul Kane we see John Masefield and have an explanation of that subtle yet revolutionary change in his life and his poetry, pregnant with illustrations that, to quote another English poet, Noyes, "Would make the dead arise!"

VIII

ROBERT SERVICE, POET OF VIRILITY[1]

A Study of High Peaks and High Hopes; of White Snows and White Lives; of Sin and Death; of Heaven and God

A PREACHER once preached a sermon, and in the opening moments of this sermon he quoted eight lines, and a layman said at the conclusion of this sermon, "Ah, the sermon was fine, but those lines that you quoted—they were tremendous; they gripped me!" And those lines were from Robert Service, the poet of the Alaskan ice-peaks, of the Yukon's turbulent blue waters, of the great silences, of the high peaks and high hopes; of men and gold and sin and death.

And the lines that gripped the layman were:

"I've stood in some mighty-mouthed hollow
That's plumb-full of hush to the brim;
I've watched the big husky sun wallow
In crimson and gold, and grow dim;

[1]The poetical selections appearing in this chapter are used by permission, and are taken from the following works: The Spell of the Yukon; Rhymes of a Red Cross Man, published by Barse & Hopkins, New York; Rhymes of a Rolling Stone, published by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.

ROBERT SERVICE

Till the moon set the pearly peaks gleaming
And the stars tumbled out neck and crop;
And I've thought that I surely was dreaming
With the peace o' the world piled on top."

The Spell of the Yukon.

Everything that the great northland holds was dear to him and clear to him and near to him. He knew it all as intimately as a child knows his own backyard. He makes it as dear and near and clear too, to those who read:

"The summer—no sweeter was ever,
The sunshiny woods all athrill;
The grayling aleap in the river,
The bighorn asleep on the hill;
The strong life that never knows harness,
The wilds where the caribou call;
The freedom, the freshness, the farness;
O God! how I'm stuck on it all!"

The Spell of the Yukon.

Virile as the mountains that he has neighbored with; clean as the snows that have blinded his eyes, and made beautiful the valleys; subdued to love of God through the height and the might of all that he sees, with a vigor that shakes one awake, he speaks, not forgetting the pines; for the pines are kith and kin to the mountains and the snows:

"Wind of the East, wind of the West, wandering to and fro,
Chant your hymns in our topmost limbs, that the sons of men may know
That the peerless pine was the first to come, and the pine will be the last to go.

"Sun, moon, and stars give answer; shall we not staunchly stand
Even as now, forever, wards of the wilder strand,
Sentinels of the stillness, lords of the last, lone land?"
The Spell of the Yukon.

And these white peaks, and these lone sentinels lift one nearer to God:

"But the stars throng out in their glory,
And they sing of the God in man;
They sing of the Mighty Master,
Of the loom his fingers span,
Where a star or a soul is a part of the whole,
And weft in the wondrous plan.

"Here by the camp-fire's flicker,
Deep in my blanket curled,
I long for the peace of the pine-gloom,
Where the scroll of the Lord is unfurled,
And the wind and the wave are silent,
And world is singing to world."
The Spell of the Yukon.

"Have you strung your soul to silence?" he abruptly asks in "The Call of the Wild"; and again, another searching query, "Have you known the great White Silence, not a snow-gemmed twig aquiver? (Eternal truths which shame our soothing lies.)" And again another query that rips the soul open, and that tears off life's veneer:

"Have you suffered, starved, and triumphed, groveled down, yet grasped at glory,
Grown bigger in the bigness of the whole?
'Done things,' just for the doing, letting babblers tell the story,
See through the nice veneer the naked soul?"
The Spell of the Yukon.

and how his virile soul rings its tribute to the "silent men who do things!"—the kind that the world finds once in a century for its great needs:

"The simple things, the true things, the silent men who do things—."
The Spell of the Yukon.

Sin and Death

The world is full of sin and death, and the former is so often the father of the other. Service has seen this in the far, hard, cruel northland as no other can see it. The hollowness of material things he learns from this land of yellow gold, the very soul of the material quest of the world. He learns that "It isn't the gold that we're wanting, so much as just finding the gold:"

"There's gold, and it's haunting and haunting;
It's luring me on as of old;
Yet it isn't the gold that I'm wanting
So much as just finding the gold.
It's the great, big, broad land 'way up yonder,
It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that thrills me with wonder,
It's the stillness that fills me with peace."
The Spell of the Yukon.

Or another verse:

"I wanted the gold, and I sought it;
I scrabbled and mucked like a slave.
Was it famine or scurvy—I fought it;
I hurled my youth into a grave.

I wanted the gold, and I got it—
Came out with a fortune last fall—
Yet somehow life's not what I thought it,
And somehow the gold isn't all."
The Spell of the Yukon.

Who has not learned that? Thank God for the lesson! Too many of us hurl our youths, aye, our lives into the grave learning that, and only come to know at last that Joaquin Miller was right when he said,

"All you can take in your cold, dead hand
Is what you have given away."

And how the warning against sin hurtles its way into your soul; its grip; its age; its power:

"It grips you like some kinds of sinning;
It twists you from foe to a friend;
It seems it's been since the beginning;
It seems it will be to the end."
The Spell of the Yukon.

Sin is like that. Service is right! Sin lures, and calls under the guise of beauty. But sin, as John Masefield shows in "The Everlasting Mercy," is ugly. In the modern word of the street "Sin will get you." Service says the same thing in "It grips you."

God and Heaven

Maybe you have never thought of God as the God of the trails and Alaskan reaches, but

Service makes you see him as "The God of the trails untrod" in "The Heart of the Sourdough." He does not leave God out. Nor do these rough men of the avalanches, the frozen rivers, the gold trails, which are death trails. Indeed, these are the very men who know God, for do not their "Lives just hang by a hair"?

"I knew it would call, or soon or late, as it calls the whirring wings;
It's the olden lure, it's the golden lure, it's the lure of the timeless things,
And to-night, O, God of the trails untrod, how it whines in my heart-strings!"

The Spell of the Yukon.

This God leads to "The Land of Beyond," the heaven of the gold seeker:

"Thank God! there is always a Land of Beyond
For us who are true to the trail;
A vision to seek, a beckoning peak,
A farness that never will fail;
A pride in our soul that mocks at a goal,
A manhood that irks at a bond,
And try how we will, unattainable still,
Behold it, our Land of Beyond!"

Rhymes of a Rolling Stone.

And the northman cannot forget death, as we have suggested, because he is face to face with it all the time, at every turn of a river; at every jump from cake to floe, at every step of every trail:

Just Think!

"Just think! some night the stars will gleam
Upon a cold, grey stone,
And trace a name with silver beam,
And lo! 'twill be your own.

"That night is speeding on to greet
Your epitaphic rhyme.
Your life is but a little beat
Within the heart of Time.

"A little gain, a little pain,
A laugh lest you may moan;
A little blame, a little fame,
A star-gleam on a stone."

Rhymes of a Rolling Stone.

Perhaps it is because the men of the north are always so near to death and so conscious of death that they hold to the strict Puritanical rules of conduct that they do, expressed in Service's "The Woman and the Angel," that story of the Angel who came down to earth and withstood all the temptations until he met the beautiful, sinning woman, and who was about to fall. Hear her tempt him:

"Then sweetly she mocked his scruples, and softly she him beguiled:
'You, who are verily man among men, speak with the tongue of a child.
We have outlived the old standards; we have burst like an overtight thong
The ancient outworn, Puritanic traditions of Right and Wrong.'"

"Then the Master feared for His angel, and called him again
to His side,
For O, the woman was wondrous, and O, the angel was
tried!
And deep in his hell sang the devil, and this was the strain
of his song:
'The ancient, outworn, Puritanic traditions of Right and
Wrong.'"

The Spell of the Yukon.

And I doubt not, but that we all need that warning not to give up "The ancient, outworn, Puritanic traditions of Right and Wrong."

Rhymes of a Red Cross Man

Here it is that we find a consciousness of the Eternal creeping through the smoke and din and glare. Here, like the hard, dangerous life of the Alaskan trails, only harder and more dangerous; here amid war in "The Fool" we catch six last lines that thrill us:

"He died with the glory of faith in his eyes,
And the glory of love in his heart.
And though there's never a grave to tell,
Nor a cross to mark his fall,
Thank God we know that he "batted well"
In the last great Game of all."

Rhymes of a Red Cross Man.

And even amid the terrible thunder of war the "Lark" sings, as Service reminds us in his poem of that name, sings and points to heaven:

"Pure heart of song! do you not know
That we are making earth a hell?
Or is it that you try to show
Life still is joy and all is well?
Brave little wings! Ah, not in vain
You beat into that bit of blue:
Lo! we who pant in war's red rain
Lift shining eyes, see Heaven too!"

Rhymes of a Red Cross Man.

To close this study of Service, which has run from the hard battle ground of the Alaskan trails to the harder battle ground of France; which has run from a study of white peaks and white lives, to high peaks and high hopes, through sin and death to heaven and the Father himself, I quote the closing lines of Service's "The Song of the Wage Slave," which will remind the reader in tone and spirit of Markham's "The Man with the Hoe":

"Master, I've filled my contract, wrought in thy many lands;
Not by my sins wilt thou judge me, but by the work of my hands.
Master, I've done thy bidding, and the light is low in the west,
And the long, long shift is over—Master, I've earned it—Rest."

RUPERT BROOKE

IX

RUPERT BROOKE[1]

Preacher of Friendship, Love, Country, Gods, and God

WILFRED GIBSON expressed it for us all; voiced the sorrow and the hope in the death of Rupert Brooke, a victim of the Hun as well as that other giant of art, the Rheims Cathedral; expressed it in these lines written shortly after Rupert Brooke died:

"He's gone.
I do not understand.
I only know
That, as he turned to go
And waved his hand,
In his young eyes a sudden glory shone,
And I was dazzled by a sunset glow—
And he was gone."

Thanks, Wilfred Gibson, you who have made articulate the voice of the downtrodden of the world, the poetic "Fires" which have lighted up with sudden glow the slums, the slag heaps,

[1]The poetical selections from the writings of Rupert Brooke appearing in this chapter are used by permission, and are taken from The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke, published by John Lane Company, New York.

the factories, the coal mines, and hidden common ways of folks who toil; thanks that you have also beautifully lighted up the "End of the Trail" of your friend and our friend, Poet Rupert Brooke; lighted it with the light that shines from eternity. We owe you debt unpayable for that.

And you yourself, war-dead poet, you sang your end, full knowing that it would come, as it did on foreign soil, far from the England that you loved and voiced so wondrously. And now these lines that you wrote of your own possible passing have new meaning for us who remain to mourn your going:

"If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home."

The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

And so here, even in this hymn of your passing, you have given a striking illustration of one of your strongest characteristics, love of homeland. Poet of Youth who left us so early in life, take your place along with Byron, and Shelley, and our own Seeger—a quartette of

immortals, whose voices were heard, but, like the horns of Elfland, "faintly blowing" when they were hushed. Though you were but a youthful voice, yet left you poetry worth listening to, and preached a gospel that will make a better world, though it had not gone far enough to save the world.

The Gospel of Friendship

Among the few definite, outstanding gospels that Brooke preached is seen the gospel of friendship. In "The Jolly Company" he says:

> "O white companionship! You only
> In love, in faith unbroken dwell,
> Friends, radiant and inseparable!"
>
> "Light-hearted and glad they seemed to me
> And merry comrades, even so
> God out of heaven may laugh to see.—"
>
> The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

Then, again, in a poem which he called "Lines Written in the Belief That the Ancient Roman Festival of the Dead Was Called Ambarvalia," he voices in an even more striking quatrain the immortality of friendship. What a thrill of hope runs through us here as we, who believe that life brings no richer gold than friendship, read this poet's thought that friendship too shall last beyond the years!

"And I know, one night, on some far height,
In the tongue I never knew,
I yet shall hear the tidings clear
From them that were friends of you.—"
The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

The Gospel of Love

And where Friendship sweeps into love who shall tell, or where the dividing line is? But while Brooks lived he forgot not love. His was a throbbing, beating love whose light was a beacon night and day; a beacon of which he was not ashamed. He set the fires of romantic love burning and when he went away he left them burning so that their light might light the way for other poets and other lovers and other travelers when they came. He believed, like Noyes, that love should not be weak; that that was the great hope. Noyes said:

"But one thing is needful, and ye shall be true
To yourselves and the goal and the God that ye seek;
Yea, the day and the night shall requite it to you
If ye love one another if your love be not weak."
From Collected Poems of Alfred Noyes.

Now I do not mean to suggest that the love that Brooke sang was exactly the type that Noyes sang in these four lines. In fact, one feels a difference as he reads the two English poets, but they are alike in that each agreed that Love should not be weak, whatever it was.

Brooke sang of romantic love, high and holy as that is; love of Youth for Maiden, lad for lass, and man for woman; and thank God for the high clean song that he gave to it in such lines as in "The Great Lover":

"Love is a flame;—we have beaconed the world's night.
A city:—and we have built it, these and I.
An emperor:—we have taught the world to die."
The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

And again in that same great poem:

"—Oh, never a doubt but, somewhere, I shall wake,
And give what's left of love again, and make
New friends, now strangers. . . . "
The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

The Gospel of Love for One's Country

And who shall say where the line of cleavage is between that love which clings to Friends; and that greater or conjugal love which moulds man and woman into one; and love for children, blood of one's blood, and love of country; and love of God? I say that those who are truly the great Lovers of the world love all of these and that not one is omitted. At least the truly great Lovers have the capacity for love of all these types. I have found no expression of paternal love in Brooke, for he had not come to that great experience of life before Death claimed him. And because Death robbed him of that experience Death robbed us of a rare

interpretation of that special type of Love. But of all these other types which I have mentioned we have a clear expression in the slender volume of poems that he left us as our heritage from his estate. And, since we have already read one beautiful expression of this love for his country in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, we will add here another stanza of that noble expression of his love for old England.

"And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven."
The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

What a voice for the times! What a voice for America! Would that some American Brooke might arise to sing this same deep song.

A Gospel of the Gods

Rupert Brooke had a wide range of interests as indeed any great Lover of Life and living must have. He expressed the hopelessness of the heathen gods in a poem which he called "On the Death of Smet-Smet, the Hippopotomus-Goddess" in lines that fairly sparkle with the electricity of destruction and sarcasm:

"She was wrinkled and huge and hideous? She was our Mother.
She was lustful and lewd?—but a God; we had none other.
In the day She was hidden and dumb, but at nightfall moaned in the shade;
We shuddered and gave Her Her will in the darkness; we were afraid.

(The People without)
"She sent us pain,
And we bowed before Her;
She smiled again
And bade us adore Her.
She solaced our woe
And soothed our sighing;
And what shall we do
Now God is dying?"

The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

And so it was that with the deepest sense of understanding, with the deepest sympathy, without intolerance Brooke, in this one verse sets the Heathen gods where they belong and sets us where we belong in our relations to those who worship these gods and goddesses. It is all they have. We have no right to sneer and scorn until we are able to give them better. These poor Egyptians knew no other God. They said plaintively "but a God; we have none other"; and "And what shall we do now God is dying?" The crime of destroying faith in a lesser god until one has seen and can make seeable the real God is the greatest crime of civilization. And to this writer's way of thinking

there is no greater sin than that of Intolerance; a sin to which a certain portion of the institutionalized church is prone. Noyes shot the fist of indignation at this type of intolerance straight from a manly shoulder when he said:

"How foolish, then, you will agree
Are those who think that all must see
The world alike, or those who scorn
Another who, perchance, was born
Where in a different dream from theirs
What they called Sin to him were prayers?"

The Collected Poems of Alfred Noyes.

Brooke saw the same thing and had great tolerance for those who worshipped the "unknown gods"; worshipped the best they knew, although it were a feeble worship. He understood their outcry that they knew not what to do, now that their god was dying:

"She was so strong;
But death is stronger.
She ruled us long;
But time is longer.
She solaced our woe
And soothed our sighing;
And what shall we do
Now God is dying?"

The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

The Gospel of One God

Then sweeping upward, although one must admit, with groping, reaching eagerness, this young poet tried to find, and at last did find,

the one God. He mentions this God that he found more than any other one thing about which he wrote, so far as I can find. In one slender volume are more than a dozen striking references. Take for example the last fifteen lines of "The Song of the Pilgrims":

"O Thou,
God of all long desirous roaming,
Our hearts are sick of fruitless homing,
And crying after lost desire.
Hearten us onward! as with fire
Consuming dreams of other bliss.
The best Thou givest, giving this
Sufficient thing—to travel still
Over the plain, beyond the hill,
Unhesitating through the shade,
Amid the silence unafraid,
Till, at some hidden turn, one sees
Against the black and muttering trees
Thine altar, wonderfully white,
Among the Forests of the Night."

The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

Or again, from "Ambarvalia":

"But laughing and half-way up to heaven,
With wind and hill and star,
I yet shall keep before I sleep,
Your Ambarvalia."

The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

Immortality, which goes hand in hand with the God of immortality, the God of the "Everlasting Arms," is voiced in "Dining-Room Tea," a poem addressed to one whom he loved:

"For suddenly, and otherwhence,
I looked on your magnificence.
I saw the stillness and the light,
And you, august, immortal, white,
Holy and strange; and every glint,
Posture and jest and thought and tint
Freed from the mask of transiency,
Triumphant in eternity,
Immote, immortal."

The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

Then, speaking of the war and peace with great yearning and great faith, the young poet cried a new glory in what he calls "God's Hour" in a poem on "Peace":

"Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping."

The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

And who has not felt this, but has not been able to thus express it? And who has not seen that somehow, strangely, mysteriously, wondrously, the youth not only of England, but of America has leaped to "God's Hour," as Brooke calls this war; leaped from play, and from listlessness in spiritual things; leaped from indifference to things of the eternities; leaped to a magnificent heroism, selflessness, sacrifice, brotherhood; leaped to a new and Godlike nobility.

To all who mourn for their dead lads comes the cheering word of Brooke, who himself paid the great debt of love. It comes out of a poem called "Safety." Read it, you who mourn, and be comforted:

"Dear! of all happy in the hour, most blest
He who has found our hid security,
Assured in the dark tides of the world that rest,
And hear our word, 'Who is so safe as we?'
'We have found safety with all things undying!'"
The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

"We have found safety with all things undying." Brooke heard God's word as did the prophet of old crying, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord," and this sonnet comes as a personal message to mourning mother and father in America. As they listen they hear the voices of those they loved crying: "Who is so safe as we? We have found safety with all things undying." Thank God that this poet, though young, lived long enough, and saw enough of war and death to give this heartening word to a world which weeps and wearies with war and woe and want! Thus in this new immortality we shall

"Learn all we lacked before; hear, know and say
What this tumultuous body now denies;
And feel, who have laid our groping hands away;
And see, no longer blinded by our eyes."
The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke.

Date Due

SFTS Library
2 Kensington Road
San Anselmo, CA 9496
For renewals call (415) 258-663

All items are subject to recall.

BZ3.5
S85

WITHDRAWN

STIDGER